

CHAMBERS' JOURNAL



May 1953
TWO SHILLINGS NET

**Who's
air-conditioned
for comfort?**



Nothing under the sun is quite so good as Aertex for keeping you comfortable. In the heat of the day the thousands of tiny air-cells in the Aertex cellular weave ventilate and cool your body; yet as soon as it turns chilly they insulate you from cold.

There are Aertex shirts, underwear, pyjamas for men and boys; pyjamas blouses, underwear for women and girls; corsets and babies wear, too!

AERTEX Genuine Aertex bears this label

Write for Free Illustrated Catalogue to A.M. (56) 465 Oxford St London, W.1



Barbour **WEATHERPROOFS**

In Fawn or Bronze Beacon Gabardine, lined check; men's and ladies' well-cut models in all normal sizes, prices from 105/-.

Fine Beacon Oilskins, men's from 95/-, ladies' from 75/-.

Stout Black Oilskin coats for work wear from 58/6.

Dark-Green Beacon Thornproofs—the toughest and hardest-wearing waterproof made—from 130/-.

Waterproof Clothing of all kinds. Send for 52-page Catalogue, full of comfort-giving, weather-resisting wear.

BARBOURS Ltd.

14 Beacon Buildings,
South Shields.



Kelvin

MARINE ENGINES

DIESELS

Full Diesel engines—four-stroke, compression-ignition, solid injection, in a range of eight models from 22 to 132 H.P.

Comply with Lloyd's and Board of Trade requirements.

RICARDOS (PETROL/PARAFFIN)

In a range of powers from 7½ to 30 H.P.

All Kelvin engines are supplied with full marine equipment.

The Bergius Co Ltd
DOBBIE'S LOAN — GLASGOW C.4

DR. BARNARDO'S HOMES

Still dependent on Voluntary Gifts and Legacies



Our family depends on your support—what YOU can give! Feeding, clothing, housing, educating and training 7,000 boys and girls calls for a deep purse. Please help.

10/- will help to buy
our children's food.

Cheques, etc. (crossed), payable "Dr. Barnardo's Homes," should be sent to

9 BARNARDO HOUSE, STEPNEY CAUSEWAY, LONDON, E.1.

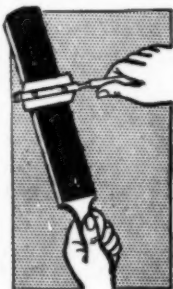
HAPPY SHAVING AND MONEY SAVING

With the ALORIX STROPPING FIT. Satisfied Users say: 'Still using same blade.' 'Very satisfactory,' etc. Complete set of cowhide strop (on wood handle), blade holder, special stropping compound and instructions. Gives new blade results every day. Takes all standard double-edged blades.

P. and P. 6d. extra.

Satisfaction guaranteed. **7/6**
Inc. P.T.
Export price, 7/- post free.

ALORIX LIMITED (Dept. C.J.),
32 St. James's Street, London, S.W.1.



TRUE ECONOMY IS THE ART OF MAXIMUM USE

A clear saving of many pounds by having your suits, coats or costumes turned, cleaned and renovated by experts. Furs and fur coats remodelled, cleaned and repaired at moderate cost.

Own materials made up at moderate cost.

Mail orders a speciality.

Personal supervision by the principals given to all orders.

D. A. FERGUSON, LTD., 90-94 EASTER ROAD, EDINBURGH 7
'Phone: ABB 4055. Established 1897.

"MILLER-KELVIN" MOTOR LAUNCHES

"Fifer" Fishing Boat Winches
and Equipment

JAMES N. MILLER & SONS LTD.,
Shipbuilders, St. Monance, Scotland

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Contents—May 1953

	PAGE
BY GUESS AND BY GOD	Albert Richard Wetjen 257
A FLYING START: Air Transport and Sport	John S. Webb 264
TOBACCO-GROWING AT HOME	Wynter Ridley 267
BALLADE OF DEPARTURE FROM A PATRON (Poem)	Tom Wright 269
BLACKLEGS	Hugh Borrow 270
WHITE HORSES (Poem)	James MacAlpine 272
BIRDS IN BRITAIN	Garth Christian 273
A PENNY IN THE EAST END	East End Old Boy 275
SHEIKH HASSAN AL JARRIAH	Brigadier-General Sir Terence Keyes 277
SCIENCE AND SHOES: The Work of SATRA	Cyril Wilkinson 282
THE HEIGHTS (Poem)	Adelina Landsbert 284
PEAT-FIRE MEMORIES: V.—The Village School	Kenneth Macdonald 285
A COTSWOLD INN (Poem)	Joan Pomfret 287
THE KIND LADY	Laurence Kirk 288
DOROTHY'S POEMS: The Romance of Mrs Craik	Alex J. Philip 292
STOKE MEADOW: The Story of a Fattening Pasture	T. Bedford Franklin 295
THE POPLAR-TREE (Poem)	Wilfrid Thorley 299
PROPERTY OF THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL	A. M. Kay 300
DUSTBINS REDUNDANT: Life in an African Hut	A. E. Haarer 305
TWICE-TOLD TALES: XXIX.—Celestial Love	308
THE WOODCUTTER'S SON	Mathew Haynes 309
MECHANICAL ACCOUNTING AS A CAREER FOR GIRLS	Olivia Greenwood 311
MY BELOVED (Poem)	Gilbert Rae 312
YELLOW TOOTH, THE TRESPASSER	H. Mortimer Batten 313
SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE—An Electronic Photographic-Flash Appliance. A Strop for Safety-Razor Blades. An Electric Safety-Switch. The Common Cold. Salt and the Soil. Are Antibiotics Modern? A New Use for Charcoal. Vacuum Containers. A British Oil and Fat Extracting Advance. Rubber-Bodied Barrows. Bags without Seams. Nylon in Surgery	317
VEGETABLES FOR THE FUTURE	W. E. Shewell-Cooper 320

Illustrations by Ridgway

TO CONTRIBUTORS—All communications should be addressed to:

'The Editor, Chambers's Journal, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2.'

Manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or by stamps or their equivalent (postal order or imperial or international reply coupon).

Annual subscription, including postage, home or abroad: 26/6 (except Canada, 26/-).

Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post.

Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2, and 6 Dean Street, London, W.1.

Agents for Advertisements:

England—T. B. BROWNE, LTD., 117 Piccadilly, London, W.1;

Scotland—JOHN MENZIES & CO. LTD., Glasgow and Edinburgh, 534 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, C.3.

Part 5, May 1953.

FI

An interesting experiment

WE SUGGEST that you try this experiment upon yourself. For the space of one month, change your newspaper. Take the Manchester Guardian.

You will at first be disconcerted. All change of habit disconcerts. But within a week—when once you have accepted the fact that the Manchester Guardian will neither pander to your lower instincts nor yet pose as an infallible organ—you will find your heart warming to this outspoken newspaper.

You will find that good writing has its own savour, a delicious one. You will welcome the candour and clarity of the reporting. You will sense that the Manchester Guardian is a true part of the true England. You will see why the Manchester Guardian is everywhere known as a 'national' newspaper.

An interesting experiment! It can do you nothing but good to try it out this very week.

If you have any difficulty in getting your Manchester Guardian regularly, please write to: The Manchester Guardian, Manchester



By Guess and by God

ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

I DON'T know if it's Mr McCaffrey's story or Captain Menzies's. I'm not supposed to be a sailor anyway, so I couldn't be sure. I've been the captain's steward for fifteen years, ever since he took over the *Bengal Pride*, and you know what sailors think of stewards. Our opinions don't count and we're not much use except for fixing up cabins and rustling the grub and maybe once in a while nursing a sick man along. So put me down as a bystander and I'll tell you what I saw and heard.

Mr McCaffrey was the new second mate when we sailed from the coast for Charns Bay, down in the South Pacific. He was a big fellow, with red hair, freckles, a cocky sort of grin, and a pug-nose. He was twenty years old, only six months out of cadet school and very belligerent about it. Captain Menzies looked him over when he reported, and sort of half-sighed. 'I see you've made a couple of voyages,' he said, flipping over the second's papers. And he added humorously: 'That practically makes you an old-timer.'

Mr McCaffrey frowned a bit and rubbed his chin with his uniform cap. 'I guess I can get along, sir,' he admitted stiffly. 'I—er—wonder if I could have a few hours off before I turn to.

There's a girl . . .' His voice died away as the old man leaned back in his swivel-chair and smiled.

The old man was long, lean, rangy, and grim. His hair was white and his face seamed and sun-burned from forty-odd years of salt water. When he smiled the way he smiled at the new second you just tightened up because he wasn't being funny. 'Mr McCaffrey,' he said very precisely, putting his finger-tips together, 'you have been on board possibly fifteen minutes, and already you want permission for shore leave.' I was busy tidying up the cabin and he inclined his head at me. 'Steward, show Mr McCaffrey his room. And kindly inform him we sail in six hours and there is a great deal to be done.'

That was the old man's way when he wanted to be particularly sarcastic. He addressed a third party with the information intended for the second. The new mate flushed and said: 'I quite understand, sir. Sorry.' And very stiffly he slammed on his cap and went out.

I went after him.

'Pretty stuffy old bird, eh?' he snapped as I unlocked his door. 'How the hell was I to know we were going out right away?'

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

'I wouldn't know, sir,' I told him. 'But if I were you I'd get into work-clothes and report to the mate. We're loading some heavy stuff aft and you'll find him there.'

'We got any other old fossils aboard?' the second wanted to know, which showed he was still pretty green.

You don't ask stewards questions about things like that, especially the captain's steward. I said: 'I really wouldn't know, sir. I've only been on board fifteen years.' And I left him swallowing hard and went back on the lower bridge.

The old man was idly rocking back and forth and staring out of the open door. 'Like most of the others, steward,' he said absently. 'They get pretty sound training at the cadet schools and they know all the answers.' He took out his pipe and bit down on it without lighting it. 'You know,' he added, 'you can learn most anything from books—navigation, even seamanship of a sort. But there's one thing you can't learn. And that,' he waved his pipe, 'is experience. You have to pay for that, and the price is time. Oh, well!'

I said: 'Yes, sir,' and passed him his tobacco-jar. I'd heard him make the same little speech ever since the war had stripped us of experienced hands needed to take over the new ships that were sliding fast off the ways. We'd get a crowd of land-trained green-hands and we'd break them in, and as soon as they got so they were fairly reliable they were taken away to more new ships, and we were stuck with another bunch of green stuff to wrestle with. I knew how the old man felt. Outside of the chief engineer and the bosun, he was about the only one on board with any real sea years behind him, and I'd seen him age a little every voyage. I'd aged myself, for that matter, what with handling slangy, fresh stewards each run who did not know a dishrag from the way to set a table.

I HAD some business aft a little before we sailed and I could hear Mr McCaffrey's voice blaring out even above the winch rattle. He was on his knees, in a tangle of ropes and blocks, telling the bosun how he had a tackle rigged all wrong. That boy certainly figured he was good. He had Mr Tomkins, the first mate, and Mr Adrian, the third, for a rather approving audience, and half the stevedores were standing around grinning. The bosun was a raw-boned Norwegian who'd served in

sail before the second was born, and he was just standing there impassively with his hands in his hip-pockets, his jaw working away on a chew of tobacco, and his faded blue eyes looking dreamily uninterested. 'Oh, yah,' he said at last. 'Dot would work, but I do it my way, see?' and he turned his back and waved to the men to go ahead.

Mr McCaffrey got up, dusting off his pants and swearing indignantly. 'I like that!' he raged. 'I give him the very latest dope and he tells me . . . Say, who's running this ship, anyway?'

Mr Tomkins, the mate, gripped his arm and shook him a little, laughing. 'I know, McCaffrey, but you can't argue with 'im. The old man'd back him up if you squawked, anyway. Best thing here is to tell the bosun what you want done and then forget it. It's a mess usually, but it's done somehow.' Mr Tomkins, I think, had been to sea all of five years, so he had a glimmering of what the old man called experience.

You get the idea. It was the same below in the engine-room and it was the same in the fo'c'sle. All husky youngsters with just a spotting of older men, but somehow the *Bengal Pride* always got in, by guess and by God, I suppose, as the saying is.

WELL, we sailed at last and I had things to worry about myself, trying to break in a couple of new stewards. The second mate busted a wire back-spring he forgot to order cast off and the first mate had some argument with a couple of fo'c'sle drunks so all the ship and most of the dockside could hear. But that's usual these times, and we got clear all right. I knew Captain Menzies wouldn't leave the navigation bridge until things had shaken down a bit, so I took him up coffee and sandwiches. He was in the chartroom checking and rechecking the course the second had laid out, and the second was leaning against the chart table frowning and looking sour. I guessed he felt a bit insulted, though I could have told him he wasn't being picked on.

I set the coffee and sandwich tray down on the old man's special low table clamped near one end of the chartroom settee, and he said automatically: 'Thanks, steward. I'll be down for dinner. You can fix a bath for two bells.' And I said: 'Yes, sir,' and started to go, when I heard the second, pretty exasperated, say: 'But I tell you, sir, we can't get into

Charns Bay. I've been looking it up. The charts, such as they are, give us only two fathoms at best, and the *South Pacific Pilot* says it's only a good anchorage for small, light vessels. I should think that lets us out. We're drawing thirty feet."

"Possibly," said the old man, tossing the dividers down on the chart and stretching. I suppose his lumbago was bothering him again. "Anyway, the course is good, Mr McCaffrey. You carry on so. . . . Er, Charns Bay. Oh, yes. What edition of the *Pilot* have we?"

The second muttered something and scowled and jerked the volume from the shelf above the settee and thumbed the pages. "Fifteen years old, sir!" he announced viciously. "And I suppose the chart we've got is as bad!"

"Probably," agreed the old man, sighing. He dropped to the settee and stirred his coffee. He talked very mildly. "Very few South Pacific charts are accurate, you know. You simply have to go in and find out. Hand-lead and guesswork."

"Well, what dope we've got's not going to be any help," the second stated, slamming back the *Pilot*.

The old man smiled that wintry little smile of his and I got ready. "Steward," he said dryly, "would you kindly inform Mr McCaffrey that the *Bengal Pride* and myself were selected to start a possible line to Charns Bay for somewhat specific reasons. Would you also inform him that the entry in the *Pacific Pilot* as of fifteen years ago was supplied by myself, from very preliminary sketchy surveys."

The second stared, pop-eyed, and swallowed. "You mean you—then you *must* know we can't get in with that depth!"

Captain Menzies sipped his coffee and nodded. "No," he agreed reasonably, "we couldn't. But my surveys were sketchy at the best and the great typhoon and tidal wave of '36 tore out the mushroom coral and scooped a channel clear to the beach." He shrugged. "How do I know? I don't.—Er—steward, would you kindly inform Mr McCaffrey the Hydrographic Office has been good enough to agree with my deductions. Just a matter of logic when you know the waters. We are what you call pioneers. Charns Bay is important if it can be used. I think it can."

Mr McCaffrey just stood there gaping, and then slowly scratched his head. "Now look, sir," he said. "You mean you're backing a hunch that Charns Bay's a good harbour now? That we can get deep water freighters in?"

He fumbled for a cigarette. "I know there's a war on, and sticking your neck out is just one of those things, but look—"

"Steward," said the old man, stopping the talk, "I think McCaffrey would like some coffee too."

So I said: "Yes, sir," and the second just stood there all puzzled and frowning and pretty exasperated.

I heard him later talking to the mate. "I don't aim to be wrecked on a crazy beach with a lot of fuzzy-haired cannibals coming after me," he blared. "All because some old goat sat in a swivel-chair back in '36 and figured out what *might* have happened to a blocked channel. I still think he's nuts!"

"Sure," soothed the mate. "We're all nuts or we wouldn't be going to sea."

The second just snorted and walked away.

WELL, things were pretty subdued for a while after that, as we ran into a thick fog that hung for days and depressed everyone. We were running at half-speed and by dead-reckoning, of course, and I heard there were one or two rather touchy disagreements about the course between Mr McCaffrey and the old man. Mr McCaffrey, as I've said, felt he was pretty damned good and was out to make everything a debatable matter. I only saw such a clash once myself, when I took coffee and sandwiches to the chartroom the second night of the fog. The old man and Mr McCaffrey and Mr Tomkins were pawing over a chart, or rather Mr McCaffrey was while the others looked on. The second was pretty grim too, jabbing here and there with a pencil and slapping the chart with the parallel rulers. "And I tell you the current drift's not over a knot here, sir," he was saying positively. "Give a fifty per cent error either way and we'll still clear the Lagos Shoals."

The old man lighted his pipe and nodded. "You're maybe right, mister," he agreed, "but I recall the *Starlight* ran aground on Lagos in thick weather because of figuring much as you do. There's no reliable data on the drift here. Better be safe than sorry. So suppose we allow for a three-knot drift."

"That's pretty wild!" exploded the second.

The old man nodded again, good-naturedly. "Oh, sure," he said. "It'd be unusual, to say the least. But let's just suppose, and we'll swing wide to make sure."

"And lose a day, maybe two," said Mr

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

McCaffrey, indignant. 'I thought this Charns Bay stuff was urgent.'

'Urgent, but not held to a schedule.' The old man gave a twisted smile, watching him. 'Let's go for'ard, Mr McCaffrey, and try to figure it,' he suggested. 'Maybe ease your mind.'

'Go for'ard?' choked the second. 'You can't even see to get off the bridge in this fog. And how could you see to do any sort of figuring?'

'Well, we can try,' said the skipper, reasonably. 'And if you can't find your way just hang on to my coat. I've been fifteen years on the *Bengal Pride* and I hardly need a clear day to find my way around.'

They went out together and I heard the telegraph ring and the wheel go over so the ship was hove to, dead slow, on the flat, fog-hung sea.

I didn't see what happened for'ard, of course, but so far as I understood it later, Captain Menzies dropped some lifebelt flares overside and he and the second watched the ghostly lights drift away into the smother, the ship being practically stationary, and the old man estimated the drift speed at a good two knots. I never heard what McCaffrey actually thought of the experiment, but I did hear him say it was uncanny how the old man could find his way along deck in that smother, and not even trip over a deadeye or a ringbolt. Still, as the old man said himself, he'd been fifteen years on the ship and knew his way about.

THE old man sent for me to bring up some coffee just after the drift argument and he was looking over a radio slip when I got to his cabin. 'We just picked this one up, steward,' he said, sounding pretty tired. 'Charns Bay was supposed to be out of any immediate war zone, but now it seems the Japs have been flying planes around, maybe figuring we might take a look in and see if the harbour is possible. Or maybe they've notions of their own about it. Anyway, we may have trouble. You'd better tell your department to wear life-jackets night and day again. We've all been getting a little slack lately.'

I said: 'Yes, sir,' and passed the word around, and I noticed the gunners got more alert and we all but instinctively watched the sky as we got nearer port.

I ran into Mr McCaffrey in the saloon alley-

way. 'You, steward,' he said, stopping me. 'You're pretty close to the skipper, I guess. What's he going to do about this Jap plane business?'

I just said the usual polite: 'I wouldn't know, sir.'

'Well, it looks to me we ought to shove into one of the navy bases and get some escort protection before we barge into Charns Bay. We won't have a chance against bombers.'

I said: 'Possibly not sir, but I'm sure Captain Menzies has thought of that.'

'Oh, hell, yes!' snapped the second. 'He thinks of every damned thing! But he ought to talk this over—' He checked himself—I figured he suddenly realised he was saying too much to the wrong party—and stalked away, muttering.

IT must have been about two days later, as we were easing up through the archipelago to the big island where Charns Bay was located that the plane came. Everyone spotted it at once—and how could you miss it? We were steaming full ahead over a long, treacherous green sea, and the sun was high and the sky sheer blue, with never a cloud, so the black speck stood out like a thumbtack. Of course we all sweated about whether it was a Jap plane or one of ours, and we had to wait until it peeled off for its dive before anyone was sure.

Then the gunners all started to yell and went into action. They'd been waiting a long time for something like this. The rest of the crew yelled too, with the excitement, but you couldn't hear them, because the guns were squirting lead and hosing across the sky. I went up to the old man's room to make sure everything was ready, just in case we had to abandon; and then I went up on the navigation bridge.

Captain Menzies was standing by the telegraph, smoking his pipe and watching the plane. Mr Tomkins, the mate, was by the helmsman and Mr McCaffrey and the third were in the port wing looking through their glasses.

The Nip came down like an arrow and let go a bomb and then zoomed up and away and circled. The bomb was a bad miss way off to starboard and then, as the plane came back for a second try, the gunners got him.

He simply ran smack into it. You could see him stagger in mid-air, and then smoke started coming out and we all cheered. Even

BY GUESS AND BY GOD

the old man took off his cap and waved it, but the unexpected happened. I suppose the Jap pilot was already dead at the controls—it didn't look like a deliberate suicide job. The plane just kept on coming, and it fell right into us. One wing hit the funnel and crumpled and what was left of the plane scraped across the starboard bridge wing and there was a terrific explosion.

All I remember about it is that I was thrown from the chartroom door to the after end of the bridge. I came to, pretty dazed, but not badly injured, my head stuck through some splintered wood and blood running all over me. By the time I got up things were pretty quiet. The guns had stopped and the wreck of the plane had plummeted straight into the sea. Curiously enough, the ship itself wasn't injured much, but the navigation bridge looked like a butcher's shop.

The helmsman was hanging over a mangled wheel—and he hadn't any head. Mr Tomkins, the mate, was in a soggy huddle, dead at his feet. The third mate was sitting up and rubbing his head and groaning, while Mr McCaffrey was swaying on his knees, his uniform half torn off, and he was swearing a blue streak.

Captain Menzies was flat on his face, but alive and moving a little, and I stumbled over and helped him get up. He had a lot of cuts and blood all over, but he wasn't badly hurt. 'Oh, it's you, steward,' he mumbled when I asked how he felt. 'I—ah—' He brushed a hand over his eyes, shook his head a time or two, as if to clear it, and was quiet for so long I thought maybe he was going to faint. I was just about to duck below for the brandy, when he said in a sort of funny voice: 'Let me hold the rail, steward. I'm a bit dazed.' So I steered him to the rail and he said quietly: 'How are things now? Is the ship all right?' They always think of the ship first.

Someone, I think it was the gunnery officer, came falling up from the main deck, all jubilant. 'Well, we got him, sir! Dead on! I hope . . .' He stopped as he saw the bridge and swallowed a little. 'Hell,' he said slowly. 'I was going to report no bad damage. I'm—I'm sorry, sir. I thought that explosion went outboard.'

The old man brushed his hands across his eyes again and then sort of waved. 'Apparently not,' he said dryly. 'Er—steward. Just tell me what the damage is.' So I checked things over and told him, and then Mr McCaf-

frey stopped swearing and took the old man's arm. 'Lucky for us there wasn't half-a-dozen of 'em, sir,' he managed shakily. He looked pretty white, and he wasn't so cocky now. 'The mate'—he started to gag and then got over it—'the mate's dead, I guess. And the quartermaster. But I think the ship's all right.'

'That's fortunate,' said the old man huskily. 'You're okay, Mr McCaffrey?'

'A bit banged around and pretty mad, sir,' the second reported. 'But I guess okay.'

'Well, take over for a while,' said the old man, and then he got hold of my shoulder. 'Steward, help me to the chartroom. I've got to do some thinking.' Well, he looked pretty bad and shaky, and I eased him to the chartroom settee, tossed a blanket over him, and ducked below for some brandy and hot coffee, and chased the messroom steward up with hot water and towels to get the old man cleaned up. He had his eyes closed when I got back and he was talking wearily to the second. 'If the ship isn't damaged, we don't break radio silence,' he said. 'You understand?'

The second stood there biting his lip, and dabbing at his cuts. 'Yes, I understand, sir. But what if any more planes come along?'

'That'll be different,' said the old man, not opening his eyes. 'We'll figure that one when we come to it. There's just a chance we were spotted by a stray and he might not have reported. Got to'—he coughed—'got to take a lot of chances in this war. Our job's Charns Bay. How are we heading now?'

'Nowhere,' said the second bluntly, 'until we get the emergency steering rigged or the bridge wheel fixed.'

The old man lifted a hand and let it drop back, resigned. 'Well, do it and put her on her course. What was it?' He seemed still dazed and I was worried.

'Two-forty degrees, sir,' said the second.

'And our position?' asked the old man. The second hesitated and the old man smiled faintly, his eyes still closed. 'You're the navigator, mister. You ought to remember.'

'Yes, sir,' said the second. 'Just a minute.' He took a look at the chart and log and figured things out, and then asked sort of apologetically: 'Would you like to see the chart yourself, sir?' The old man shook his head.

'I don't think I need it, mister. The chart's in my mind. Just keep her at two-forty until eight bells—no, make it one bell, to allow for

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

our stopping—then make the course two-thirty. Get another fix as soon as you can. And get the bridge cleaned up and back in shape.'

The second didn't say a word, just sort of stumbled away, a bit stunned, I guess, at getting the whole ship pushed in his lap, and I heard him yelling for the bosun.

'Steward,' the old man said, 'I'll be staying up here from now on.'

I said: 'Listen, sir. You're not in such good shape. Let me get you in your bunk. You'll feel better, sir.'

'Charns Bay is tricky work,' he said dryly, 'even if we meet no more planes. So I'll stay, steward. I'll be all right.'

AND that's the way it was. They buried the mate and quartermaster, and got the bridge fixed up pretty well, and the old *Bengal Pride* just snored along on her course, and the old man just stayed in the chartroom. Even after he was able to get up and around, he just lived there. I figured that was plain anxiety, or maybe Mr McCaffrey was right and the old man was nuts. In fact the skipper acted so queer at times I was sure he must be a bit off his beam. I went up with coffee around noon next day and he was standing at the for'ard rail and Mr McCaffrey was holding out the old man's sextant. 'It's near time, sir,' he was saying. 'You'll want to get a shot.'

But the old man waved him away. 'I'm still a bit shaky. You can handle it, mister.'

The second looked at him, puzzled, and I knew what he was thinking. It was the first time the old man hadn't taken his own noon sight, but of course the bombing had really jolted him. Anyway, Mr McCaffrey shrugged and went ahead and when he reported the fix and a change of course the old man just nodded. 'That'll be good until two bells,' he said. 'Then shift her south six degrees.'

For the first time since he had been aboard, the second was a bit embarrassed—he'd been tamed down some since the plane business had given him more responsibility. I guess, too, having to read the burial service for the mate and quartermaster had made him think. He rubbed his pug-nose and scratched his red head and looked at the third mate and at me and then burst out: 'Look, sir, I know you've had a bad jolt, and I don't want to argue, but don't you think six degrees extra south . . . If you'll look at the chart . . .'

The old man chewed on his pipe and shrugged. 'You try and navigate this archipelago by the charts and you'll wind up in thirty fathoms,' he said dryly. 'Make it a six shift at two bells and work me a position right after.'

'Yes, sir,' said the second after a short silence, and as he walked back to the chartroom he brushed by me, made a circular motion with his finger around one ear and whispered: 'Nuts! Absolutely nuts. He's running us right on Angers Reef.' I just shrugged, and he muttered irritably: 'Oh, how the hell would you know? You're not a sailor!'

No, I wasn't, and I'm not, but that remark got me thinking. It could be the old man had gone quite off-balance after that explosion. On the other hand, he didn't sound or act too bad, but just after two bells, when we changed course, he grabbed my arm. 'Take a look in the rough log and see what the position is,' he said. I stared at him. He was scarce ten feet from the chartroom and only had to step inside to see for himself.

I said: 'But, sir, the second just gave you the position.'

He shook me a bit and swore through clenched teeth. 'I know. But, steward'—he dropped his voice mysteriously—'I don't quite trust Mr McCaffrey. You know—these youngsters. I just want a witness—in case—' I thought he certainly was off his head then, but I did what he asked and began to have a few new ideas myself.

Well, don't ask me about technical details. All I know is the old man kept me beside him practically night and day and I ran errands for him and even learned to read the compass-card so I could report just what course we were holding. He kept insisting he didn't trust McCaffrey and wanted me as a witness just in case anything went wrong. McCaffrey was in a fog and I was pretty much with him. But what could the second do? The old man always seemed to be right. We threaded safely between islands that were just misty dots on the horizon, when, as I understood it, if we had held the chart course, we would have piled up.

'I quit,' said the second to me once, slamming his cap on the chart table. The old man was out on the bridge at the time. 'The pilot books say one thing and the charts agree and the old man tosses them all overside and still gets through.'

BY GUESS AND BY GOD

'I wouldn't know, sir,' I reminded him. 'I'm not a sailor.' And he snorted and said something about beginning to wonder about himself, too.

TO make a long story short, we weren't bothered by any more planes and just plodded through green seas until one afternoon I heard the old man tell Mr McCaffrey: 'Around four bells you should sight a big, humped-up rock to port. Get a bearing and when you're full abeam make the course dead west.'

'You'll be meaning Pyramid Rock, sir?' said the second. 'Charns Bay's just off it. But the charts—well, not quite dead west, sir.'

'You'd be surprised,' said the old man with one of his wintry smiles. 'I lost the bark *Caroline* in '24 because I didn't go dead west.'

The second mate sounded as if he were strangling. 'Well, it's your ship,' he finally managed. 'But I'm setting my protest down in the log. You've been right or lucky so far, but everything I've checked says south by west from Pyramid Rock to make Charns Bay. Maybe you'd better disrate me. At least I'll keep my ticket clean, you—you—' He was so boiling over he couldn't finish, and Captain Menzies just stood at the for'ard rail and bit on his pipe so hard the muscle knots stood out on his jaw.

'We'll keep your ticket clean,' he said tensely. 'The course is dead west, as soon as we're abeam. I'll make the log entry myself.'

The second walked to the port bridge wing, stiff-backed and swearing to himself, but I could see he wasn't quite sure. He knew he was right about the charts and the books, but the old man had been right too, and it was a toss-up. But at the last analysis the *Bengal Pride* was the old man's ship and his personal grief. Still, for the first time, I felt a bit sorry for the second and I got my first hunch about all our trouble.

In any event, we went dead west after getting Pyramid Rock abeam, and about an hour later the old man told the third to stop the ship. 'Mr McCaffrey,' he called, and the second came surlily alongside him. 'If you look ahead you should see a high headland to starboard and a swampy sort of mangrove mess to port.'

'Sure, I see them,' said the second shortly. 'Who couldn't? So what do we do now? Go dead east?' He was pretty sarcastic.

The old man ignored him. 'The entrance is about six hundred yards wide,' he said slowly. 'Please listen very carefully, mister. The only sure channel is to port. Bring the ship head-on to the big hill you'll see ashore inside the bay. Then make the course south by west as soon as you clear the headland. The coral used to block you about a quarter of a mile in, but according to my figuring and from what I've heard it's been smashed out.'

'Which means,' said the second dryly, 'I might as well forget the chart altogether.'

'Exactly,' said the old man. 'From now on I regret to say it's up to you. You'll go in dead slow, standing by both anchors just in case, and with men in both chains. You'll go straight until you are fore-and-aft with the headland and the hill and then you can anchor. If I'm wrong, you won't need to anchor, you'll be aground.'

'Just like that,' the second choked. 'Shoving a wild job on me. By guess and by God stuff, eh. Well, why'n't you take her in yourself! I—'

He checked as the same hunch dawned on him that had been dawning on me. The old man reached out and patted his arm, smiling a little. 'You're a good man, McCaffrey, even if we don't get along. I could take you through the archipelago because I had the chart in my mind and a little sea-room, but now it's a harbour job—and—a skipper has to be able to see in close quarters.'

I got it then, of course, and so did the second. He went white as a ghost and stared at the old man as if he'd never seen him before. He even had to hang on the rail to steady himself. 'So you're blind,' he managed at last. 'I ought to have known. The way we've been running—the chart in your mind. . . . I don't know what to say!'

Well, the old man got in *his* dig then. 'No, it's something you'd hardly find in the books,' he said humorously. 'I guess the explosion did something to my eyes. But, you see, I didn't need the books to manage. And the charts were no good, anyway. I'd already had the experience. . . . Now take over, McCaffrey. And be careful. Remember, she's still my ship.'

'Yes, sir,' said the dazed second, and he looked at me and bit his lip. I could see the slow, tight change come into his face as he really became an officer. 'Hell,' he said thickly, 'hell! And I thought I could navigate!'

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Then he started giving orders and we went in. I got back to the chartroom with coffee and sandwiches after a while. Captain Menzies was sitting on the settee, chewing on his pipe and staring sightless at the bulkhead opposite. He laughed a little as he heard the anchor go down, sure and safe in fifteen clean-swept fathoms, just as he had figured. 'Get me the log-book, steward,' he said gently. 'And a pencil. I'll make one last entry myself. You know, a fellow likes to report he got his ship in.'

I said: 'Yes, sir,' and Mr McCaffrey spoke

from the doorway. 'One thing I'd like, too, sir,' he said slowly, and a bit huskily. 'Can I sign that entry?'

SO you see what I mean about not being sure if this is Captain Menzies's story or Mr McCaffrey's. They're both sailors, and I'm not.

But I do know the second got his experience and I do know the old man was right. You don't get it out of books. You have to pay for it. And the price is time.

June First Story: *When Johnny Robins Flew by Miles Tripp.*

A Flying Start

Air Transport and Sport

JOHN S. WEBB

AIR transport is making sport more and more interesting. By effecting quicker and easier transportation between the cities and race-tracks of Europe, the aeroplane is enabling horses, birds, and racing-cars to compete in a much wider selection of events than hitherto was possible.

Although flying often costs more than surface transport, the benefits derived are enormous, both for the competitor and for the paying public. Because the aeroplane saves valuable hours, and often days, in transit-time, racing animals and machines are able to appear more frequently and over a wider area. Consequently, owners, riders, and drivers have a greater chance of winning more prize-money. Not only does the aeroplane enable the competitor to make the greatest use of his animal or machine, but it also greatly improves his own freedom and frequency of movement, making it possible for

him to appear before a wider public. Thereby, the public, in the long run, sees more of the best, and this naturally results in a tendency for the man in the street to flock to the enclosures in greater numbers. In turn, the promoter, too, feels happy, and may even increase the prize-money for future events.

Most competitors travel about Europe as paying passengers on scheduled airlines, but their horses, cars, boats, and pigeons demand specialised equipment and handling. The ideal aircraft for this kind of work is the well-tried British Bristol Freighter, a large twin-engined flying box-car, whose beauty is the least praiseworthy of its characteristics. The Freighter is so designed that the whole of the nose splits down the middle and opens outwards to form two large loading-doors. A lorry can thus be backed right up to the loading-sill of the fuselage, or ramps may be positioned so that cars or horses can enter the

A FLYING START

2400-cubic-foot cargo-hold under their own power. The cargo-hold is about 7 feet square and 37 feet long; it can take three cars or four to five horses—a weight in all, that is to say, of up to six tons. In a separate passenger-cabin in the rear of the aircraft there is room for twenty passengers.

The world's largest fleet of Bristol Freighters is owned by Silver City Airways of London, operators of the cross-Channel aerial motor-car ferries; therefore, this company has the closest association with livestock and vehicle transportation for the sporting world.

ALMOST every day a Silver City Bristol Freighter lands near a French or British racecourse and disgorges a cargo of three or four horses. The animals flown to Great Britain are usually French and Irish challengers brought in from Paris or Dublin. They stand a greater chance of taking away trophies and prize-money than other foreign rivals who make the journey by boat.

This is because horses do not react at all well to sea travel and quite often need a few days in which to recover from their journey before racing. By way of contrast, animals do not suffer ill-effects when flying: once they have accustomed themselves to the noise of the aeroplane they usually prove better passengers than human beings. Horses, then, which fly to their meetings can be raced almost directly after their arrival, and they can be flown back home again as soon as the meeting has ended. A horse flying from Paris to Cambridge can make the journey, run his race, and return to France, all in the same day. His counterpart, coming by surface transport, would spend the first day travelling by road from Paris to a French Channel port, his second day sailing and resting, and yet a third day making the road-trip to Cambridge; he would then need two days' rest before racing. Taking into account the time of the return journey, it can be seen that the trip by sea is up to eight times longer than by air. The cost by air, assuming that four horses are carried in one Bristol Freighter, works out at between 4s. and 8s. a mile, depending on the amount of empty flying which has to be done. When one realises that for as long as seven days one escapes paying someone else for looking after the horse, and that the animal is not useless for that time, it will be appreciated that the cost of flying is not high by comparison.

Thunderhead II, one of the horses flown to England several times last year, won the Two Thousand Guineas at Newmarket. For the 1952 Derby Meeting, quite apart from a few steeds flown over by M. Boussac, Silver City brought twenty horses to England. Later in the summer they flew Neiderlander, the first German racehorse to visit England since 1926, from Düsseldorf to Ascot.

Silver City's Freighters are fitted with specially constructed wooden horse-boxes, heavily padded to prevent the animals accidentally knocking themselves. These boxes are both tall and narrow, making it impossible for livestock to fall over in flight. Each beast is led into the aircraft by a flying groom and is installed in a separate box; usually it is fed in the air, but in any event its quarters are generously strewn with straw and hay.

Dozens of horses were flown to Helsinki for the Olympic Games last year. The British and Canadian teams travelled in Avro York aircraft of Skyways and the French and Egyptian teams flew in Silver City Freighters. Would we have won our Gold Medal if, instead of their nine-hour flight, Foxhunter and his stablemates had spent more than a week on the ocean without proper exercise?

Polo ponies, too, have recently started to fly. Several trips with ponies, riders, and equipment were made last summer between Folkestone and Deauville, Europe's polo centre. Among those flown was Lord Cowdray's famous team.

ALTHOUGH horses make the greatest use of the aeroplane for hopping about Europe, racing-cars run them a very close second. Famous drivers like Stirling Moss and Reg Parnell have spent more time in the cabins of aeroplanes recently than they have in the cockpits of their own cars, but now their cars are beginning to spend as much time in the air as their drivers. Pure racing-cars are not flown very often, but sports cars competing in international road and track races are travelling almost daily. They drive down to the English coast, either to Southampton or Folkestone, and then travel by ordinary air-ferry plane to Cherbourg or to Le Touquet. That short inexpensive twenty or thirty-five minute flight across the Channel saves from five to fifteen hours of a racing-driver's time, while the risk of his vehicle being damaged or delayed is much reduced.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Occasionally, the racing calendar blatantly shows that there are two very important races, far apart, on successive days; occasionally, too, it is decided that the same car must compete in both events. That is when the aeroplane really comes into its own. For example, it is now possible for a racing-car to cross the finishing-line at Belfast at 7 p.m. on Saturday and to be flown direct to Milan before dawn; mechanics then have ten hours or so for tuning and repairs before the starter's flag falls after lunch. Five years ago, such a feat would have taken almost a week.

Now and again a really urgent job crops up. At 8 p.m., three years ago, Silver City's commercial manager was just leaving his office. The telephone rang. The B.R.M. car people, who had entered the car in a race at Silverstone the following day, would not have the vehicle ready until immediately before the start of the race. Although Silverstone was only fifty miles away from Bourne, in Lincolnshire, where the car was, it would not be possible to have it there in time for the start. Could anything be done? Yes, it could, and was. The car was delivered to the starting-line with only minutes to spare.

The B.R.M.s made their second flight in a Bristol Freighter in June 1952, when they were rushed back from Albi in the south of France to take part in the Ulster Trophy Race. When, in 1952, the Sunbeam Talbot team won coveted awards in the Alpine Rally the four successful cars were rushed from Nice to England at four hours' notice, and were thus able to complete a Lap d'Honneur at Silverstone during the great *Daily Express* International Trophy Meeting.

Early last year George Hinchliffe and James Bullman, driving a standard Hillman Minx tourer, clipped two days off the London-Capetown speed-record for motor-cars. The air-ferry helped them to save several hours, for they were in France only a hundred and forty minutes after leaving Marble Arch; they flew the Channel, from coast to coast, in a Bristol Freighter.

AFTER horses and cars, pigeons are the greatest users of aircraft as an aid to racing. International pigeon-racing is big business these days and one of the most speedy, economic, and reliable ways of taking a homing-pigeon to a starting-point six hundred miles from its loft is to fly it.

It works this way. Pigeon-fanciers pay a small fee and hand over their birds to their club. The club soon has thousands of birds and arranges for them to be flown to a pre-determined release-point. They are then put into the familiar pigeon-baskets which we see at our local railway-station and a four-hour flight in a Bristol Freighter soon takes them the distance of a twenty-four-hour train trip. On arrival, the birds are handed over by the aircraft captain to the pigeon-fanciers' representative and are eventually released. The cost to the fancier is about 4s. a bird.

Large numbers of British cyclists are flown to France to take part in Continental races and tours. Transport for them is very cheap, for the air-ferry only charges 5s. for the cycle and 40s. for each passenger. The bicycle is recognised by the airline people as representing its owner's most treasured possession. Consequently, great care is taken and machines receive very gentle handling. For good measure the airline gives a free insurance, whereas the boat people charge 33 per cent extra. Reg Harris, world cycling ex-champion, uses the air-ferry, but he dismantles his cycle and puts it in the back of his car. Motorcyclist Geoff Duke must have thousands of hours of flying to his credit, much of it in cold freight aircraft in the dead of night, but all sportsmen agree that were it not for the comforts and, occasionally, discomforts of flying, their income would be much smaller. The airlines in turn would also agree that without the backing and confidence of world sportsmen their revenue, too, would be smaller.

Perhaps the strangest use of the aeroplane for sporting purposes is for the transportation of racing dinghies. Sometimes these boats are towed behind a car and there is the unusual combination of boat, car, and aeroplane, representing the elements of sea, land, and air, all travelling together as a compound unit. Generally speaking, only wealthy people fly their boats as well as their cars. The first boat ever to fly this way was a Fairey Firefly dinghy taken to Cherbourg in May 1952; since then, dinghies have crossed the Channel twelve times on their way to French coast races. The cost of flying a Firefly dinghy is about £7.

The aeroplane is now firmly established as a devoted servant of sport. It brings good to all sides. It helps the competitor to earn more prize-money, it satisfies and promotes public interest, and it brings financial happiness to the sports promoter.

Tobacco-Growing at Home

WYNTER RIDLEY

A SURPRISING number of people in the British Isles nowadays grow their own tobacco, but it is still a very small fraction of the whole population, and if you join their number you can be sure at least of an excellent talking-point. Try to impress any ordinary gathering by telling of your roses or your vegetable-marrows, and you'll get nowhere; make a casual reference to your tobacco crop, and they'll all listen as eagerly as you like.

Quite the nicest thing about growing tobacco is the easiness of it—if, like my wife and I, you cannot give much time to your garden. Of course, you won't get the best possible results if you don't work at it. That is life! But there are many, many crops that will still be difficult if you spend all your time in the garden. Tobacco is not one of them.

Let there be no misunderstanding: 'easiness' means merely a comparative freedom from natural hazards. Tobacco likes growing, and needs no coddling. But even doing it our way, taking the line of least resistance all the time, there is plenty of *work*—and that is life again, for you don't get money for nothing, and the cash benefit here is considerable.

THE most widespread of all beliefs about home-grown tobacco is that it isn't fit to smoke, and it may well be that you have been offered a pipeful by a friend and found politeness difficult. This is a good enough starting-point for a brief description of the whole process.

Never, never, never get your tobacco-plants—or your seeds, if you are a real gardener—from a local seedsman, who may be stocking only the tobacco which you grow for its flower and scent. You won't get a tobacco worth smoking out of that, and, if you try, you'll be discouraged for good.

The best thing to do is to join one of the

amateur associations. The British Pioneer Tobacco Growers' Association at Church Crookham, Hampshire, and the Tilty Tobacco Centre at Dunmow, Essex, are both well known. They will guide you from the start, and give you all the instructions you need; most important, they will supply seed, or plants, which will produce smoking tobacco.

A body of experience has accumulated since, in 1948, the Chancellor of the Exchequer relaxed the customs regulations which for many years had prevented any extensive home growing in this country. His object was doubtless primarily to save dollars, and since the individual who co-operates in this saving also saves money for himself, almost everyone is happy. You can grow up to 25 lb. of tobacco for yourself, and that is quite enough for most people for a year. You must not sell your tobacco: there are heavy penalties for anyone who does.

As I suggested above, if you are a real gardener you will probably want to buy seed. We buy plants—but the raising of tobacco from seed is no harder than any other such raising. You put the plants out in May or June, according to the latitude and the weather, and with them you put out slug bait, because for their first week or so the plants are distinctly vulnerable to slugs. But that is almost their only danger *in situ*, for, as they grow stronger, their nicotine content increases, and most insects avoid them like the plague.

For the first few days you give up all hope of seeing any crop at all, for the plants wilt sadly, and indeed often appear to shrink before your eyes. It may be that one or two will in fact disappear completely, but it should not be more than that, and after about a fortnight they begin to pick up. From then on they never look back.

Their rate of growth, which develops after about a month, is quite surprising. A full-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

grown plant, if it is one of the heavy strains—we favour Brazilian, in our medium soil—may be five feet high, and will need all of a square yard to itself; and since in a good year it may reach maturity as early as the beginning of August, it clearly has to grow quickly. It should be added that the modern school of thought advocates closer growing, which checks the development of the leaves and, it is claimed, produces a finer tobacco.

You will be told by your association how to handle it. Twelve leaves are all that should be left to grow, and when they have formed you nip all other growths out, that being your main share in the proceedings through July. Suckers form fast once you have nipped off the flower-heads, but perseverance pays dividends in concentrating the plant's strength in the chosen leaves.

You will be instructed, too, in the recognition of ripeness, which ranges from a slight mottling of the leaves and a turning down of the tips, in some strains, to complete browning in others. Then you harvest your crop, and hang it up to dry, leaving the plants in the ground to produce, in any but the worst of summers, a sizable second crop: not such handsome leaves, this time, and not such a good smoking tobacco in the end, but still very well worth while harvesting in October, before you uproot the great stalks, an inch or so across at the root, almost woody in their texture and most recalcitrant compost material.

Of course, if you are growing your own seed for next year, you will want to let one or two plants produce their flowers; and you will bag them where necessary in muslin to stop cross-fertilisation. But that is for real gardeners, again, and not for us, the lazy ones.

DRYING the crop out is not the least of your troubles. Some of your leaves may be a yard long and half-a-yard across, and the weight is alarming. We have found lengths of wire the best method of hanging, if only in that the wire pierces its own holes in the stalks. The drying leaves must have air, and should be hung, if you have the room, with a few inches between each leaf and the next; ours are always lamentably crowded together. An open barn is ideal. Circulating air is, anyhow, most desirable; but the leaves must not be in the open, at least in wet weather, for rain will wash the nicotine out of them.

A month or so later you will get your next

surprise. You will check your leaves with the book of rules, find that they are ready for processing, the midrib being quite dry, and take them down—and the great burden that you hung up has shrunk to an insignificant weight. When fully dried out, the leaves should weigh only one tenth of their weight when harvested, and in your first year you will probably find this sadly disappointing. But on analysis you will probably discover that two dozen plants have produced something like 4 lb. of dried leaf, and there is no other crop that will give you as paying a harvest as that.

You can now start, if you are taking the hobby up properly, on the curing. You will need to follow your instructions carefully, damping and sweetening and pressing, and you may like to buy some of the apparatus which is available nowadays to help you. You will be able, of course, to take more pride in the finished product if it is all your own work, but we skip the curing, and send the whole crop off for this process to our association; the charge is small and the saving of work considerable. And in due course the parcel comes back with the leaf looking just the same as when it left, but with the vice removed.

The word 'vice' is used advisedly, in the hope that no reader of this article, doing all the operations himself, will be tempted to scamp the curing. Unless the job is thoroughly done, tobacco is a dangerous, almost a lethal, commodity; hence, of course, the stories of dizziness and blindness that went around when home growing was finding its feet. Even when you have been merely handling the leaf, if you are careless enough to rub your eye with an unwashed hand, it will sting for half-an-hour. It is not for nothing that the greenfly find nicotine unpleasant!

With the leaf finally cured, at home or away, you are confronted with your final chore—removing the midribs and shredding the leaf. At the outset, the customs authorities allowed shredding to be done, with the curing, away, but this privilege was early withdrawn—a great shame, for the shredding is a tremendous time-waster. Here a machine is almost essential to get anything like a professional-looking tobacco, either for pipe or cigarette. There are cheap machines and dearer ones. Mine is a cheap one, and it does admirably for my pipe tobacco, but you may want a finer cut for cigarettes. I shred the leaf as I need it, through the year, keeping the unshred leaf in an airtight tin.

TOBACCO-GROWING AT HOME

WHAT is the tobacco like? Of course, it doesn't smoke like a bought tobacco—we don't get enough sun for the results to be the same as in sunnier countries—and our product is a rather harsh tobacco: we have not yet succeeded in getting a grade A rating from our association. But I mix it, two to three or one to one, with a bought tobacco which has been carefully matched with it, and I claim that the resulting mixture is very good indeed. It has an aroma, my wife tells me, of cigars—and you can, by the way, make your own cigars from the best leaves—and I like it. For three years there has been enough tobacco to supply my wants—my wife, who does at least half the work, doesn't smoke!—and the average all-in cost of it in that time has been elevenpence an ounce. If the time spent on growing, harvesting, and shredding were costed into this figure it would be quite a bit higher; but few people take up gardening for the money of it, and the costing of any home crop would have to make a contra allowance for the fun involved. We prefer to regard the tobacco as a useful aid to a depressed domestic budget. The real gardener, whom throughout we have been regarding with envy, will not

need to be told that, if he grows from seed and, even more energetic, does his own curing, that figure of elevenpence will for him shrink almost to vanishing-point.

Perhaps more with tobacco than with any other home crop a great deal depends on the weather. The summer of 1951 was, with us, wonderful: bumper first and second crops, and an average cost of a little under tenpence. The previous year had been dreadful—the plants never looked anything like handsome, and the average cost of a much smaller yield was 1s. 2d. The weather affects the drying too: the hanging leaves must be carefully watched for mildew, and it is usually better to spray them with a preventive mixture before hanging. Mildew is easy enough to remove, by dipping in a wash of bismuth salicylate, but it mars the finished tobacco.

In answering the usually rude inquiries of friends—'What's that you're smoking—tram-drivers' gloves?' 'No. Actually I grow my own tobacco'—one discerns, one thinks, a reluctant admiration behind the invariable caustic comment. When pocket and pride can flourish together, then surely is one fortunate indeed!

Ballade of Departure from a Patron

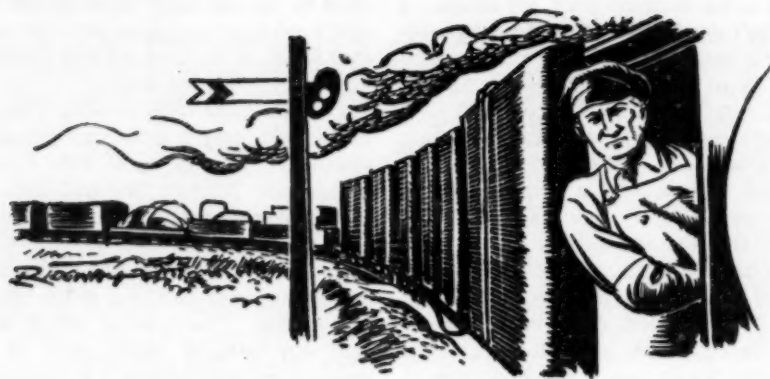
*As sadly as a mourner leaves a bier,
I take my leave your ever-grateful guest,
For comfort's never precious without fear,
For every day's a little life compressed
Between the sun and moon, and life's a quest.
Each passing lifetime makes it clear
Walled in by idleness I cannot rest.
I know I shall not find my answer here.*

*A prince would leave you costly golden gear,
A holy man would leave your household blessed,
A sighing girl would leave you with a tear,
A jester leave you with a parting jest—
Even a bird would leave an empty nest.
I leave regret, a poet's souvenir.
I cannot preen a peacock's gaudy breast,
And know I shall not find my answer here.*

ENVOI

*Prince, though your table's groaning with the best,
And though I hold your cellar very dear,
My little life is dying in the west,
I know I shall not find my answer here.*

TOM WRIGHT.



Blacklegs

HUGH BORROW

JUST as my brother Jim and I were about to start our annual holiday a railway strike began. We had intended to go to Cornwall, but as it was impossible to reach there by train from Middlesbrough, and as we considered it too far to cycle, we had to fill in the time as best we could. So we spent the first day cavorting about the North Sea on the tugboat of a friend.

During the day my brother, who was an engine-driver in a large steelworks, asked me if I would like to try blacklegging for a day. Being an engineering draughtsman, I knew a little about locomotives and said that I thought working a loco might be interesting. Jim said he thought that we might even be paid for it!

So next day I telephoned the local traffic-manager and asked him if he could use a driver and a fireman. He said he could, and would they report for duty early next morning at his office on the main platform of Middlesbrough railway-station.

Jim and I did some hard thinking as to how we were to get on to the platform, as we knew that the station entrance and the ticket-barriers were picketed by strikers. We decided to go in ordinary clothes, carrying macintoshes, and with our dungarees out of sight in a clean suit-

case. This worked quite well. The picket men grinned, pitied the poor saps who expected trains to be running, and let us through. In fact, they helped us all they could. 'This way to the trains!' they called with heavy sarcasm, and politely waved us on.

And so we reached the platform and went to the traffic-manager's office. There an official grinned at these silly passengers and said: 'Were you looking for a train?'

'Yes,' I replied. 'Were you looking for a driver and fireman?'

The grin disappeared from his face, and he politely said: 'Oh, a volunteer crew, eh? Thank goodness. Would you please go to the loco sheds and report to the foreman.'

We went, but first we waved farewell to the hoodwinked picketers.

The foreman looked at us in our nice clean clothes, a couple of nice clean young fellows, and said in a superior manner: 'D'ye mean to say that you two kids can handle a loco?'

We took out our dungarees and said: 'Lead us to it.'

That made him jump, and in two minutes he gave us a fine big loco, which was already warmed up. It was the biggest puff-puff that I had ever had to play with, and to get into the cab was quite a climb.

THE foreman told us to go to a certain spot between Middlesbrough and Stockton, where another loco would join us, when we were to proceed together to Shildon to bring back minerals to various works in Middlesbrough.

A conductor was appointed to accompany us, a quiet middle-aged traffic-clerk who knew the road and the signals and who would be guide to us, who knew neither. He hardly spoke through the whole journey, but shortly after we were on the move he started munching a snack. Now Jim and I hadn't thought it necessary to bring any food, as we understood that we were wanted for a return journey of only five or six hours. We couldn't know, of course, that there was trouble ahead.

I had never driven or stoked a loco before, of course, but through my drawing-office experience I knew how the wheels went round and how it was fed by coal. My brother introduced me to the gauges, the fire-irons, the throttle, brake, sand-lever, and other gadgets, and off we went.

I found no difficulty in keeping the fire going well—after all, it was just like a kitchen fire-place, only about a hundred times as big—but the weight of the enormous shovelful of coal nearly overbalanced me at first. Keeping the boiler fed with water by means of the injector was a knack that I quickly picked up and later, when I took a turn at driving, the loco did just what I wanted it to do without any nonsense.

We duly waited in a siding for our companion loco, and presently she came, but she didn't pull up—she dashed by at a speed which showed that the crew had not been warned to join up with us. So away we sped in chase. We need not have hurried, however, as after a few miles we had to stop because the loco was at a standstill on our track. We inquired as to the trouble, and were told that they couldn't feed water.

That was some crew! A works manager, a foreman fitter, a driver and a fireman—four good blacklegs—and the knack of the injector eluded them all!

My brother got the water flowing in, and off they set, as they still had sufficient pressure, but a few miles further on the trouble recurred. I worked their injector this time, having had practical experience of about one hour! I also found that their fire was very badly trimmed and, as their steam pressure had now fallen somewhat, Jim and I decided to push them whilst the pressure was rising again.

In course of time we arrived at Shildon depot, where we separated and, under the guidance of local men, each loco went to the job of gathering up various strings of trucks from the sidings. There were a few strikers about and some of them heaved rocks at us from alongside the tracks. My brother suddenly yelled 'Look out!' and, when I turned to look, a large rock whizzed past within an inch of my head on its way through the cab. I told Jim he should have yelled 'Look in!' instead of 'Look out!'

IN due course we got the signal 'Right away' and started off on our journey back to Middlesbrough. Just as we were getting up a good speed, however, the loco was brought to a stop with such a terrific jerk that we were all jammed up against the firebox panels. Jim jumped up and closed the throttle, and I jumped down and ran to the rear of the train and asked the guard why he had applied his emergency brake, for that, of course, was what had stopped us. He said that he had seen some strikers jumping on to the buffers between the trucks and he was afraid that they might fall on to the tracks and be killed. They ran away when we pulled up.

I went back to the loco and once more we set off towards home. The other train by this time was also leaving, on an adjoining track. As it had a little speed up, it soon passed us, and the last of it we saw was, of course, the brake-van. But what a brake-van! It was like an enormous crate that had been dropped by a crane, and we could see the guard in the middle of the wreck. The doors were closed, but we saw him sitting there. He yelled to us that a gang of strikers had attacked the van but had not injured him. He was extremely lucky.

Presently we approached a bridge spanning the tracks, and saw a man standing in the middle with his arms resting on the parapet, evidently loafing. We thought nothing of this until we were just passing under the bridge, when that innocent chap dropped a rock into the open cab! This missed my head by inches.

Rain was now falling. It was afternoon, and we were feeling hungry. The loco also seemed to be tired—she wasn't lively. We discussed this, and Jim said to the conductor: 'She's not pulling her weight.'

The conductor grinned in a guilty way.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

'I'm afraid the trouble is that she's trying to pull more than her weight,' he replied. 'You see, at Shildon I was persuaded to take on a hundred tons more than she is built for. I'm sorry I forgot to mention it.' And that was that. Well, it was in a good cause, so we forgave him.

After a while the loco distinctly slowed up, and when she didn't respond to more throttle Jim looked hard at the conductor and barked: 'Now what is it?'

The conductor grinned again. 'I'm afraid it's my fault. I forgot to warn you that we were approaching a gradient. It's a rather stiff one and we should have taken a good run at it.'

Taken a run at it indeed, with an overloaded loco! However, as we had now come to a standstill, the only thing to do was to go back some distance and endeavour to take the 'good run.'

So we tried this. We did better than before, but still failed to make the top of the grade. Once more we went back, further this time, and took our run. Just as we were reaching the top of the grade, however, the loco wheels started slipping. I promptly pulled the sand-lever, but the slipping continued.

I jumped down and ran to the front of the loco. I found the rails were greasy-wet, but there was no sand on them. I yelled to Jim for a hammer, and when I got it I beat on the sand pipe, crouching under the footplate close to the front wheel, whilst Jim kept the loco moving, but only at a slow pace, of course, owing to the slip. After a short time the sand began to dribble out of the pipe, the wheels gripped, I jumped up into the cab, and we proceeded more speedily towards home—and the food for which our stomachs were now aching.

WHAT with all the delays and the fact that we had not been able to fill up with water at Shildon, we were beginning to realise that we might run short of steam, so we kept our eyes open for a water-tank. We didn't see one until we were within three miles of Middlesbrough, and by this time a fill-up was essential as we had some shunting to do into various sidings.

The switch of the tank siding was against us, however, the switch control-house was closed and locked, and no one was on duty. There was only one thing to be done—with spanners from our tool-box we disconnected the points and pushed them over by hand, and with almost our last splutter of steam, so to speak, we got the loco into the siding and took on water.

But the worst was still to come. We used the last of the steam to blow some water into the boiler and then had to sit and wait for half-an-hour until we generated more steam. With nothing else to occupy our minds, what could we do but think of food and more food?

Eventually we were able to move. We coupled up to our load again and trundled the various minerals into the different sidings, and at last returned the loco to its foreman. This was at seven o'clock in the evening, and we had been on that blessed loco since seven in the morning without either food or drink.

We went into the roundhouse and had a good wash, packed our dungarees, and reported to the traffic-manager's office, where our times were recorded and where 'payment in due course' was promised. We received an order on the catering department and rushed off to the refreshment-rooms. There we drank a large tankard of beer and ate a very good dinner, at the company's expense. Just as if nothing had happened!

White Horses

*When I ran off to sea
My heart was full of pride,
I loved the prancing Pegasus
That foamed adown the tide.*

*Piaffing o'er the waves,
Like Gilpin, on and on—
My Pegasus went dancing, though
His rider soon looked wan.*

*Bellerophon was I,
For so I had to be,
To slay the monster, mal de mer,
And win my spurs at sea.*

JAMES MACALPINE.

Birds in Britain

GARTH CHRISTIAN

IT happened in a bookshop some forty miles from London. I heard a middle-aged man ask for a good book on birds. 'I used to be a sportsman,' he said, 'and spend scores of hours each month shooting birds. That was thirty years ago. Nowadays I spend just as much time seeking birds—but I carry a camera instead of a gun.'

His remarks shed an interesting light on the changing attitude of the people of Britain towards their birds. A century ago any rare bird that trespassed into an English field might well be shot, stuffed, and housed in the dining-room of some country gentleman. To-day the rare bird may be photographed. Notes on its behaviour are likely to be written, for there are bird-watchers in every district. Maybe some enthusiast will write of it in a letter to *The Times*. Certainly a report will appear in the scientific journal *British Birds*.

If the strange bird should settle down to breed, it is quite likely that some bird-protection society will endeavour to buy the surrounding land in order to safeguard the invader. In hosts of English homes men who are schoolmasters, soldiers, and business men on weekdays and naturalists on Saturdays and Sundays will ask each other if they have heard the news. 'The avocet has returned.' 'The black-winged stilts are breeding in Nottingham Sewage Farm.' 'The black redstart is nesting in London.' Events of national importance have occurred.

A century has passed since one Charles St John went out and shot all the ospreys he could find in Scotland. Thirty years later, E. T. Booth, whose fine collection of stuffed birds is permanently displayed in Brighton, went into Scotland in order to shoot the last kite to breed there. What is more, he captured its single offspring, fed it until it was mature, and then shot it as a specimen.

To-day anyone attacking the wild birds of

Britain in this way would soon be prosecuted under the Wild Birds Protection Acts which came into force in the 1880's and which are soon to be revised. Natives of Staffordshire have told me how they ate blackbird-pie up to the beginning of the century. Miners in my home district on the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border kept pretty goldfinches and linnets in cages until only twenty years ago. They loved their birds and never supposed:

*A robin redbreast in a cage
Puts all Heaven in a rage.*

IT is not fear of prosecution which is responsible for the decline of bird-killing and bird-caging in Britain. True, occasional prosecutions do occur, as when a magistrate was recently convicted of shooting the beautiful great-crested grebes because he considered that they competed with him for the fish in a Cheshire lake. A few egg-collectors may still be found in Britain, though it is significant that most of them are over fifty years of age.

No, it is the changes in public opinion which have been largely responsible for the improved status of many British birds. In thousands of back-gardens people who do not even pretend to be bird-watchers throw their crumbs, rotten apples, and kitchen scraps on to the lawn in order that the birds may feed. B.B.C. bird-recordings attract huge audiences. The popularity of these programmes can be gauged by the fact that the B.B.C. have accepted responsibility for the task of recording the songs of British birds. Dr Ludwig Koch, a native of Frankfurt-am-Main, who has done much for international ornithology, recently retired from the B.B.C. staff after completing many fine recordings.

Meantime, British publishers produce a new book on birds almost every fortnight. Not all of these are of high merit, but many are well-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

written and of genuine scientific value. Many of them achieve quick sales.

In recent years the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has gained both in membership and influence. The British Trust for Ornithology, with a distinguished expert, Dr David Lack, as Director, is carrying out valuable research into problems of bird population and territory. And the bird-ringing scheme—now administered through the British Museum—whereby ornithologists place metal rings, bearing a number and address, on the legs of birds, has taught us much about migration.

Not the least important development of recent years was the formation in 1950 of the Nature Conservancy, manned by expert scientists and financed by the Treasury, who issued a grant of £100,000 for the first year. This organisation has surveyed many of the hundred or so potential nature reserves, and eight have already been established. In all, it is hoped to acquire 70,000 acres of scientific importance.

THE fate of British birds is closely linked with the activities of the various admirable bird-protection societies. For years the golden eagles, the largest of British birds, were ruthlessly slaughtered by gamekeepers in the interests of grouse. Now, however, these powerful birds are again holding their own, thanks in no small measure to the activities of several natural history societies whose members volunteered to camp near to the eyries of these birds and keep away enemies.

More remarkable is the return of the avocet. This handsome bird ceased to breed in England around the 1840's. Though common in Holland, it remained strangely reluctant to breed in Britain. Then in 1947 the birds appeared at Scott's Hall and Minsmere Level in Suffolk. This marsh had been flooded by the Army during the War, as a measure of defence. Now new defenders of the area came on the scene in the form of officials of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. They secured the lease of the land.

Presently more avocets were seen at Haver-gate Island some few miles away. In 1948 the birds returned, and ten young were raised. More would have been reared had not rats eaten many eggs. So then the Ministry of Agriculture were called in by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to help in a war on

the rats. All went well. Soon the bird-watchers were ready for the return of the avocets.

Then on 1st March 1949 the sea smashed into the sacred breeding-sites, as it did again this year. Day and night work went on at the tremendous task of repairing the sea defence-walls. Not until April 11th were the avocets' nesting-places visible above water. Three days later the birds came back. Soon seventeen pairs were seen. More than thirty young avocets were reared. The birds—and the bird-watchers—had triumphed. In 1952 no fewer than 120 chicks hatched and 163 avocets were counted simultaneously last August.

Other birds that formerly bred in Britain may return, as well as one or two new species that we have never known here. In recent years odd hoopoes, golden orioles, and some twenty pairs of little ringed plover have bred here in a single season. The bittern, which disappeared from the country in 1886, began to breed in Norfolk in 1911 and is now increasing in some areas.

HIGH taxation has caused a decline in the numbers of gamekeepers, for few land-owners can afford the wages of many employees. The sequel has been a sharp increase in the numbers of rooks—which now total some 3,000,000—carrion-crows, jays, magpies, and all the owls. Tawny-owls, especially, are most abundant, and the barn-owl is recovering from its sad decline in pre-war years.

Yet there has not been quite the reduction in game-birds that might have been expected. Though no pheasants were artificially reared—except under special licence, which was seldom granted—between 1940 and 1950 no fewer than 925 of these birds were shot on a single estate in Oxfordshire on one day at the end of 1949. Over much of Britain pheasants are astonishingly plentiful and partridges seem to be thriving, though heavy casualties have been caused in the past year by new insecticides. The reduced amount of game-preserving has helped the hawks. Kestrels are probably more numerous than for centuries. The little merlin, hobby, and buzzard are all recovering.

Many sea-birds have tremendously increased their numbers. Black-headed gulls have changed their habits, as well as their population, and tend more and more to breed inland. Gannets and, above all, fulmars have greatly multiplied in the present century.

On the commons near my home in the

A PENNY IN THE EAST END

Sussex Weald there has been a strange fall in the tally of many smaller birds—stonechats, whinchats, and the now rare Dartford warblers—and this development seems to be general. Now chiffchaffs are fast dwindling in number. On the other hand, the decline in the caging of birds has led to large increases in the numbers of handsome goldfinches.

Thrushes, blackbirds, and robins are all more abundant. These last two—there are roughly 10,000,000 of each species—share with the chaffinches and starlings the first place among the 120,000,000 land-birds of Britain.

A few species are still in danger of extinction. The little Kentish plover seems to have left us. Only a dozen kites linger on in a remote Welsh valley—at least five pairs bred in 1952—where they are threatened by the Forestry Commission's plan to fell all beech and oak in the area. The corncrake, though not near to extinction, has strangely absented itself from the English lowlands, where it was breeding in some numbers until a few years

ago. The wryneck, once common in Southern England, is now exceedingly rare, though it is not known why.

NOT all changes in the bird population of a country are caused by man. But his influence is enormous. Even when he refrains from shooting or trapping birds, he may destroy the marshes, commons, woods, and hedgerows where they nest and feed. And too often he may disturb the birds in his efforts to watch and photograph them.

On the whole, the people of Britain have helped their birds far more than they have hindered them during the present century. For the main reason, we need not seek further than the bookshop near London. 'I used to be a sportsman,' said the middle-aged man, 'and spend scores of hours each month shooting birds . . . Nowadays I spend just as much time seeking birds—but I carry a camera instead of a gun.'

A Penny in the East End

EAST END OLD BOY

*Forty years on, when afar and asunder,
Parted are those who are singing to-day.*

THE words of that public-school song bring back to me forty-year-old memories—not of the 'volleys and thunders' of the football-field but of the feasts which we East End schoolboys could buy for a penny in London before the First World War. One penny was the recognised minimum rate for pocket-money, and one penny was therefore the unit with which, of a Saturday, we would plan our gastronomic pleasures and excursions. Farthings and halfpennies being valuable coins of the realm, it was possible, by careful organisation, to enjoy a farthing's-worth of fruit and

a farthing's-worth of sweets while watching a three-hour film show which a cinema called 'The Silverland' dispensed for one halfpenny on Saturday afternoons.

IN those days, the working-class schoolboy's estimate of the worth of a whole penny was governed by the volume of fried fish and chips which he could buy with it. Fish and chips, or, sometimes, chips without the fish, were, in fact, a measurement of currency. That was why the phrase 'a ha'penny bit and a ha'porth' passed into East End juvenile language as a symbol of the power of money.

Through the packed crowds in the steaming-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

hot fish-shop we would struggle to the counter, holding our weekly penny in our fists. Arrived there, we would call, in strained urgency, for 'a ha'penny bit and a ha'porth, please.' And we would receive no niggardly portion either.

The 'ha'penny bit' was a largish piece of golden-browned skate, rock-salmon, or other coarse fish, fried in a monumental batter, and the 'ha'porth' was a handsome helping of potato-fingers, somewhat speckled and done in a rather acrid fat. But any flaws in that newspaperful of food were easily disguised by ample helpings of condiments shaken through the hole in the cork of a litre vinegar-bottle and from the perforations of a huge metal salt-cellar.

Fish-and-chip shops were far smellier then than they are now, their staff did not wear white smocks, they boasted no gleaming white tiles above the pans, and there seemed no way of ridding either them or the neighbourhood of their biting, soot-laden smoke. But to East End boys they were, in spite of all, or because of all, penny palaces of epicureanism, and their smoke-whorls were magic veillings of high romance.

QUITE apart from sweets, which then cost eight ounces or twelve ounces a penny, there were so many food-shops ready to trade with us for a penny that we hardly envied Billy Bunter and the Greyfriars fellows their school tuck-shop.

In the fruit store, a plea for a 'ha'porth of speckled apples, please' would bring us a windfall of russets or Worcester pearmaines, generous enough to pack two large jacket-pockets. The naphtha-lighted stalls in the East End markets, which on Saturday nights looked like one of those Genoese *carugi* where Columbus once wandered, would yield up prodigious Jaffas and Jamaican bananas for a farthing, and a pound of unwrapped whole dates or figs for a penny.

It was in one of these markets, I remember, that I once found a sixpenny-piece, and, bearing it home in rising excitement, was rewarded with two little imported Russian eggs for my tea that day. As the eggs cost a halfpenny each, my mother was still left with fivepence to add to her housekeeping credit.

The more impecunious of us—those who had no farthing, and often no boots either—would delve below the stalls in a usually successful search for rejected morsels of food.

Some of the humbler fruits of the earth which shops and barrows sold in the East End forty years ago have either completely or partially gone. As well as roast peanuts, which were measured out in enamel mugs and emptied into our pockets, there were sunflower seeds, called 'Polish nuts,' which, for one halfpenny, would provide a boy with an hour's solid sport in splitting them open, even if the contents were somewhat intangible. There were also little sweet rootlike things, about the size of a large pea, which we called 'tiger nuts,' and the brittle dark-brown locust-beans from the carob-tree, deliciously like honey, though sometimes apt to go wormy. Ha'porths of these kept us happy for long whiles.

BAKERS' shops, in the days when gilt gingerbreads and large round ginger-biscuits were a farthing, competed with the sweet shops and fruiterers for our pennies. A pound of broken biscuits, which could always be relied on to yield agreeable surprises like nearly whole sweet wafers and chocolate fingers, cost but a penny. We could get a large bag of yesterday's cakes for a halfpenny, and many of the poorer boys would queue outside the bakers' shops in the early morning, before going on to school, for free, or almost free, stale bread.

Gingercake is not so fashionable now. Nor are the big currant-filled Garibaldi biscuits. Other boyhood delicatessen which have not caught on with the newest generation are sherbet-bags, which used to be supplied with a liquorice tube for inhaling the sherbet, toffee apples, aniseed balls, balls which changed from colour to colour as one sucked, and those thick liquorice sticks which one slowly melted in a tall bottle of cold water for subsequent secret consumption in school on a hot day.

There were no organised school meals, of course, and boys whose mothers could not, or would not, make a midday dinner for them could instead dine for a penny on fish and chips or else take a large earthenware platter to a near-by workmen's dining-room and bring away a large heaping of sweet baked rice topped with jam or a mighty portion of boiled green peas.

Yes, indeed, a penny forty years ago could make a veritable glutton out of a thoughtless lad!



Sheikh Hassan al Jarriah

Brigadier-General SIR TERENCE KEYES

THE beginning of this tale is a thing I have never told before, and is difficult to put into words—a platoon marching through the dark and the guide going wrong.

It was the winter of '15 in Basra. There were rumours of a threatened rising among the Arabs. Turkish agents were at work in the villages, and according to our own people the man at the bottom of all the trouble was a certain Sheikh Hassan al Jarriah. I had been sent with two platoons of a famous West Country regiment to arrest Sheikh Hassan and search his house.

The guide had been leading us by tortuous paths to avoid being seen. We had floundered through date-groves and round creek after creek since midnight. There was deep mud in the creeks, and a dank smell. It was dark as a wolf's mouth.

The men were marching two abreast, each file with his hand on the shoulder of the man in front, for they were slipping and stumbling on the greasy track, and bumped into each other when the head of the column stopped suddenly in the dark. The squelch of their boots as they trod was interrupted many a time by a bump, a slither, a curse or two, and the clatter of a falling rifle, as a soldier collided with a palm-trunk and fell heavily in the mud.

They bore it all with incomparable good-humour.

We had lost our bearings in the groves of date-palms which lie in a broad belt, intersected by multitudinous narrow creeks, along the west bank of the Shatt al Arab, the great silent, muddy river that is formed by the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates. It made no sound as it swirled onwards. The black night hid it from view. But its tremendous power could be felt even in the darkness—the mighty untamable river that can make a swimmer as helpless as a cork in a millrace, that can twist an ocean-going liner round.

Creek after muddy creek, and date-groves—we could never get away from them! Every time they held us up they seemed to come as a complete surprise to the guide. There is nothing more trying to the soldier than a night march through unknown country when the guide is at fault, and now for the twentieth time we had to halt, brought up with a jerk by a belt of palm-trees.

My patience at last gave out and the wretched guide threw in his hand. I seized him by the shoulders. He was a Persian long domiciled in the country and had all the Persian's fear of angry men. He made excuses for continually bringing us up against the

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

muddy creeks. 'Threshold of Excellence, this slave was careful to avoid the villages lest the dogs should bark and the alarm be given to Sheikh Hassan—for, by Allah, they think him a great man. At every village I tried to find my way round for fear he should be warned and escape before the dawn.'

I ordered the man to strike inland away from the creeks and to make for one of the main tracks leading up the river. He was to pay no more attention to any villages and to get us to Sheikh Hassan's house as soon as possible.

THE reports that I had received about Sheikh Hassan did not tally with what I knew about him. He was revered in all the villages of the river-bank as a man of God, an expounder of the holy law of Islam and of tribal custom; and he was also in great demand as a peacemaker in the unending quarrels that arose among the Arabs who had forsaken the life of the desert to live in the palm-groves around Basra. Here was a leader who could sway the people to his will! He could reconcile the Arabs to the new conditions of the British occupation or influence them against it, whichever way his conscience or his reading of the law dictated.

The villages, as a whole, were contented under our occupation and were reaping a rich harvest by supplying the B.E.F. with eggs, sheep, dates, and fish—the few commodities that could be found in that god-forsaken country. But it was now being reported that Sheikh Hassan was using his influence to stir up the Arabs in the villages of the Shatt in favour of the Turks and that hundreds were slipping away to join the Turkish forces. Only the night before we had received circumstantial evidence about his half-brother, and it had come to light that this young man was paying secret visits to the Turkish commander and his German advisers and passing between their camps and the Sheikh's house.

Things were beginning to look serious. The youth had a most unsavoury reputation and seemed to have acquired all the vices of the West without having learned any of its virtues. He was well known to have been the jackal of certain dissolute Turkish officials before the British occupation and the cheerful go-between of the worst behaved of the foreign residents.

This was the situation I was sent to investi-

gate. My instructions were to search the Sheikh's house for evidence of a plot, to bring away any incriminating documents I could find, and, if necessary, to arrest Sheikh Hassan himself and bring him to Basra.

THE guide was now in good heart and the small column started again on a new line. We left the creeks and the muddy slime and, swinging along at a good pace on a sandy road, passed through villages and by detached hamlets. The promise of the dawn was already in the sky and the palm-trees were silhouetted like black plumes against the faint light.

There was no attempt at concealment now. The men whistled and sang and chaffed the sleepy watchmen in the date-groves when they sat up on their string-beds to stare at us. All agog at getting so close to the Garden of Eden, someone paraphrased the old tune:

*There's one more river to cross,
One more river, and that's the river to Eden,
One more river, and that's the river to cross!*

and, ready enough though the men were to believe that the cradle of the human race was here, the suggestion that the garden had been a date-grove was received with hoots and jests. The memories of the past night and the dank cold of the muddy creeks were too recent. 'Old Adam, 'e would 'ave needed a bit more on than a palm-leaf this mornin'.'

The cold of the false dawn almost took our breath away, and as we neared the great dumb river that swirls past Basra to the sea we were again conscious of its mysterious force. Nowhere have I felt such a sense of overwhelming power as in the waters of the Shatt. The lessons of the littleness of man must have been early learned by our naked forebears in the fork of land made by the Tigris and Euphrates before they unite in one gigantic stream.

The sun was up before we reached the creek on the far side of which Sheikh Hassan's village lay. There were dozens of bellems tied up on either bank and men already working on them. It was only a matter of a quarter of an hour to pole across with the whole party, but when at last we landed on the further shore it was already six o'clock. We had floundered for so long in the date-groves that we were an hour and a half behind our time.

The village was by now alive. Shrouded figures were slipping down to the edge of the

SHEIKH HASSAN AL JARRIAH

creek, and blue wood-smoke was curling up from many of the courtyards. A very young subaltern, who was commanding the advance-guard, and who had kept me cheerful throughout the night by his naïve comments on all that happened, seemed disappointed that the arrival of a considerable party of soldiers caused so little excitement.

A broad sandy street ran into the heart of the village between high blank mud-walls, over the top of which a few palm-trees leaned at odd angles. The sun threw a deep shadow from the wall on one side of it, and on the sunny side the warmth was cheering after our comfortless night.

Before we proceeded further the officer commanding my escort took up a defensive position in the courtyards of a small group of mud-houses which were separated from the rest of the village. Here he placed the main body of his men. But one section of his small detachment was left to cover the party who were to go in with me. When all his dispositions were made, I started, taking with me the very young subaltern, a sergeant, and six men.

THIS part of the village seemed quite deserted. Not even a pi-dog scratched himself in the sand of the main street. After about forty or fifty yards the road made a sudden bend, and here I dropped two men to keep communications with the covering-party. The subaltern began to feel more hopeful. He turned a cheerful face to me. 'Shall we have a scrap, sir?'

'No scrap, I hope. A battle of wits, perhaps,' I answered, 'but remember that in dealing with Arabs the less said the better. Silence is golden. When you do have to talk, give them something to think about—hit 'em a real crack when you do!'

It seemed appropriate that as we turned the corner we came on a splendid old Arab, walking down the street towards us. The fierceness of his hawk-nose and black beard were contrasted by a remarkable air of benevolence, and from his wrist dangled a rosary, not the ordinary amber rosary of thirty-three beads, but one of ninety-nine beads of carved wood by which the earnest Moslem tells the nine and ninety glorious names of God. He wore the usual flowing Arab head-veil and kaffiyeh bound with two twisted cords, in which some gold was intertwined. I felt

certain we had found our man. 'My bird, I think,' I whispered to the subaltern, whose spirits rose visibly.

When we came up to the Arab he pronounced the usual salutation and his voice rolled deeply from his chest in a rich bass. 'Peace be with you.'

To which I gave the orthodox reply: 'And with you, peace,' and then commanded 'O Sheikh Hassan al Jarriah, lead me to your house.'

'How does the effendi know that I am Sheikh Hassan?'

'Because I have been sent to fetch you,' I said. 'And who else should you be?' And I explained the object of my mission.

He listened gravely, a magnificent figure in his flowing Arab robes, full of race and pride; and I thought of the generations of desert patriarchs and lawgivers of which he was the fine flower. The age-long clash between the desert and European civilisation had come again, and with the astounding appropriateness of his race he repeated the Moslem declaration of faith. 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God,' and he turned to lead us back a few paces to an iron-studded door in the high blank wall which opened into his own courtyard.

The dignity of his bearing, his fearlessness, and the liquid music of his speech made a great impression on the subaltern. 'That puts the old bird on the top, sir,' he remarked admiringly, as we followed behind the Sheikh, who strode majestically on ahead. He certainly made a splendid picture as he paused for a moment, framed in his own doorway, and waited for us to join him. He rapped three or four times upon the door until his call was answered by an immense negro, the whites of whose eyes rolled in astonishment at the sight of armed men.

Sheikh Hassan turned to me. With great dignity he asked that nothing should be done that would bring dishonour to his house. When I reassured him on this point, he led the way, and we went through.

THE entrance was devised in such a way that nothing could be seen by anyone standing in the doorway. A guardroom blocked the view of the courtyard, and the narrow passage between the guardroom on the left and the blank walls of the Sheikh's dwelling-apartments on the right side made

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

two right-angle turns before opening into the courtyard, thus ensuring a complete purdah for all inside.

Across the courtyard and exactly opposite the entrance were the stables, outside of which some Arab horses were tethered; and two fully accoutred riding camels were kneeling in front of their morning feed of chopped straw, which had been placed on brilliant yellow cloths. There was a well in one of the far corners, some jasmine-bushes, and a few orange-trees.

It was arranged that Sheikh Hassan should put all his women in the guardroom before we began to search his house.

While he went away to settle these matters with his harem I gave a few quick instructions to the sergeant, and the four men were soon drawn up, facing the way we had come, with their backs to the guardroom door. When these preparations were made the Sheikh returned to say that the women were coming.

'Eyes frront!' barked the sergeant. 'And none of you don't look round!'

In the meantime, I had walked along the passage until I came out into the courtyard, and was just in time to see the women crowding out of the house, completely shrouded in burkas of black and indigo, in which only the slits for their eyes and a few perforations made breathing-spaces. The voluminous gathers fell from the crown of their heads to the ground.

Hurrying to rejoin the men who were religiously keeping their backs turned, I caught the flash of a quick movement out of the corner of my eye, and instantly photographed upon my mind was a skinny yellow forearm, with a long scar on it from wrist to elbow, raised and stretched out for a second, then quickly withdrawn under a burka! Scarcely bothering to think what this might mean, I walked back along the passage and waited with the men.

The women filed into the guardroom. A sentry was placed over the door outside. Another sentry was posted over the stables opposite. The Sheikh then led the rest of the party into the dwelling apartments.

The first room we went into was large, dark, and cool, and the floor of beaten mud was covered with thin matting. At one end of it was a divan-bed upon a dais, stretching across the whole width of the room, and on the bed were many striped mattresses of purple and yellow, and pillows of brilliant colours,

and Persian rugs, rolled up in readiness to spread upon the floor for an honoured guest. In niches in the wall were pots and ewers, and jugs of metal and earthenware, and mysterious bundles; and ranged along the wall were a dozen or more great chests, some of black wood, some carved, and some bound with brass. The Sheikh made a gesture towards them. 'Here are my household things,' he said. 'Search them.'

As soon as he had received his instructions the sergeant started in the most businesslike way. First of all he spread a cloth upon the matting and then, opening each chest in turn, took out garment after garment, of silk and cotton, in crude pink and bright green, in purple and magenta and orange and plum, striped, or studded with fragments of looking-glass, or embroidered in silk. In one of the boxes there were several packets of cheap, highly-scented soap; and from the chests there arose a mingled scent of sandalwood and attar of roses.

The sergeant had taken charge of the situation with such quiet efficiency that I left him to it, and motioned the subaltern to sit with me on the divan.

At first the sergeant would not trust the men to fold up the garments and pile them neatly on the cloth, but at last he set them each to work on a chest by himself, and very soon the first two were empty. It struck me at the time that he might have been the careful father of a family helping his wife to tidy the family wardrobe, so reverently did he shake out and refold the brilliant silks.

The Sheikh looked on in bewilderment. This was not what he expected of the Army of Unbelievers. I could not help wondering why the British soldier was so different from anything else in the world. It was the essential decency of the man, this quiet typical N.C.O., the embodiment of the common-sense and thoroughness of his type, that presented such a contrast to the exotic scents and colours of the things he was handling, and to the Sheikh himself, standing there in the half-light, the beads of his rosary slipping through his fingers one by one, his lips moving silently as they formed the nine and ninety attributes of the Almighty—the One, the Kind, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Giver of Daily Bread.

THE sergeant and his men continued their search slowly and methodically—but

SHEIKH HASSAN AL JARRIAH

there was soon an exclamation of disgust from the sergeant. 'What am I to do with these, sir?' he asked. He was holding a packet of obscene postcards in his hand, which had been given to him by one of the men who was unpacking a chest of men's clothes.

I nodded to him to give them to the Sheikh. 'Yours?' I asked.

The Sheikh looked at the chest out of which they had come, and his voice trembled with shame and loathing. 'The box belongs to my father's son—the son of a slave woman.'

'Take them away and burn them,' I said, and one of the young soldiers carried out the order in the courtyard.

The search went on. At last, in the cheerful way of someone who has brought a tiresome job to a successful conclusion, the sergeant rose from his knees and came over to me with a large bundle of papers tied up in red Turkey twill. 'I think this is what you are looking for, sir,' he said, as he handed me the papers and a cheap jewel-case, wrapped in a stiff document. The box contained the Star of a high Turkish order, and the document was a formal warrant of appointment by the Turkish Government.

Meanwhile one of the young soldiers had produced a box of pistol ammunition from the chest in which he had found the photographs.

I gave the warrant and the Star to Sheikh Hassan and showed him the ammunition. 'You have heard the Proclamation?'

He licked his dry lips.

I continued mercilessly. 'The death penalty for concealing arms and ammunition. Where is the pistol?'

'By Allah, I do not know,' he said.

'Then who does?'

He looked through the open window to the courtyard outside, to where the camels grumbled and chewed discontentedly in the sun, their jaws working crosswise. There was silence for a moment. 'May I talk to the women?'

I accompanied him across the hot compound to the door of the guardroom where the women waited. I had expected the sound of their voices instead of the surprising silence within, and it was not until the Sheikh had opened the door and shouted to them loudly in Arabic that a babel arose.

The language spoken with the women of the household is not the sort of Arabic that one learns, and so I understood very little of

the rapid excited talk between the women inside the guardroom and the Sheikh standing in the entrance. Their low Arabian voices rose in a crescendo of expostulation when he pressed them for an answer to his questions. At last he turned to me in despair. 'They swear they do not know.' The bewilderment on his face was pathetic.

ALL at once, like the drawing aside of a curtain, a vision flashed into my mind, and I saw again the women crowding into the courtyard in their black burkas, and the quick movement of the upraised, scarred arm. Its significance became suddenly clear. I said to him solemnly: 'Let the slave woman with the scar on her forearm be called.'

He looked at me dumbfounded. For three or four seconds he remained motionless, then turned again to the entrance-door and gave a peremptory command to the assembled women. A flutter of consternation and excitement arose among them, and some persuasion seemed necessary before a black figure appeared reluctantly in the doorway.

'Woman! Hurma! Dweller in my harem! Would you cause your master's death?'

Starting up from where she cowered in fear, she was at my feet in an instant, her forehead on my muddy field-boots; and then, like a squirrel, she had turned and was running up the steps which led on the roof of the house before we had time to realise what was happening.

The patter of her bare feet, the rustle of her skirts, and the clanking of her silver anklets were the only sounds as we watched her in amazement, and she returned almost as quickly as she had gone. From the folds of her burka she produced the missing pistol wrapped in a cheap French silk stocking.

'How the hell did you do that, sir?' said the subaltern with admiration in his voice.

I was right. When the women left the house and walked across the courtyard the slave woman had thrown the pistol up on to the roof in a hopeless attempt to shield her young master, the Sheikh's dissolute half-brother.

The Sheikh motioned her to hand it to me. It was burning from the sun which had been beating on the roof when I, in turn, passed it over to the subaltern and told him to look after it. Poor lad, the affair was ending too tamely altogether for his taste. 'A nasty,

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

cheap German automatic, sir,' he said in a disappointed voice.

'O Sheikh,' I said, 'my report will now be that this pistol was concealed by your father's son, whose reputation we know.'

The Sheikh's whole demeanour was eloquent of relief and gratitude. His eyes turned from me to the others of the party—the fine up-standing young officer, the incomparable sergeant, the four West Country boys. 'Effendi, such honour and influence as God has given me are at the disposal of the British Government who command the services of men such as these who have honoured my house.' He looked across to where a thin

spiral of smoke was still rising from the charred remains of the obscene photographs. 'Bring fire.'

The woman ran back into the guardroom, and after a short interval came out slowly and carefully, holding a piece of glowing charcoal in a pair of iron tongs. The Sheikh took the tongs from her hand and we looked on in silence while she blew on the coal, and he set alight the warrant of the Turkish Government and watched it curl up with the obscenities on the ground, and crushed the tawdry Star into a shapeless mass with his sandalled heel. 'Truly Allah reveals all to the pure in heart,' he said.

Science and Shoes

The Work of SATRA

CYRIL WILKINSON

IF a British foot crunches down on the hitherto unconquered summit of Everest this month, scientists thousands of miles away, in Kettering, Northamptonshire, will shake each other by the hand, and then quietly turn to solving another footwear problem.

Each year these back-room boys of the Shoe and Allied Trades Research Association (SATRA) in supplying a thousand answers to questions from manufacturers and customers give foot comfort to millions. At the same time they raise the status at home and abroad of the British shoe industry, ensuring its own and the country's prosperity. More than ever before British footwear manufacturers realise that science and industry must travel tightly hand in hand to make certain of complete success.

It has been a long, uphill climb from that day in 1919 when a group of Northampton manufacturers formed the Association. Slowly the organisation expanded, until, by the be-

ginning of the War it had an annual income of £10,000. Income now has been raised to something like three times that figure through more firms becoming members, through bringing in more allied trade members, and by a government grant.

During the War the London laboratories of the Association were badly damaged and the staff was evacuated to Kettering in the heart of the Northamptonshire footwear-manufacturing area. It was decided that the Association should stay there, and a vast new block of laboratories has been attached to its war-time headquarters, an old mansion hidden behind a high wall on the outskirts of the town.

The importance of the Association grows month by month. Hardly a day passes without a footwear expert of some sort from a distant country paying a call and noting the work that is being undertaken. On one day alone visitors from Norway, Sweden, Den-

SCIENCE AND SHOES

mark, and Switzerland came to study the unique organisation. Even America, with its advanced ideas on science and industry, has no comparable association.

EVERY day scores of questions come in from firms in the Association. These members are given a day-to-day service dealing with all kinds of technical problems. At the same time a close contact is fostered between the industry and research. Not all the problems, however, come from the industry.

It was one of these different questions which arrived in October from the British Everest Expedition Committee. They wanted SATRA experts to make a boot to be used only for the last stages of the climb, for heights above 23,000 feet, where every pound off the foot means an equivalent of five pounds off the shoulder. Lightness, then, was a great essential, but equally important was the need for the boot to be extremely warm to overcome the frostbite of the extreme height. Durability could be disregarded to some extent, for the boots would not be worn for any great length of time, yet they had to be strong and well-fitting to permit safe footholds.

Undaunted by this somewhat tall order, the Association designed and made within six weeks a revolutionary type of boot. In appearance it is something like a blown-up football-boot, seemingly solid and heavy, but weighing only 4 lb. 4 oz. compared with 6 lb. 8 oz. for the reindeer-skin boots of Continental manufacture worn on the last expedition. Large eyelets, something like curtain-rings, make for easy fitting at heights where a climber has been known to take an hour to put on his boots.

Field trials in the High Alps by team members brought the verdict of Major Charles Wylie, secretary to the team, that the boots were far better than those of Continental design. Laboratory tests in a temperature of 40 degrees of frost showed that the boots kept the foot 8 to 10 degrees warmer than the best types previously tested. Major Wylie told me that he and his companions regard the boots as second only in importance to oxygen equipment. Even though the boots have not been subjected to full laboratory tests because of the shortage of time, the Everest leaders are of the opinion that the advantages of the new boots outweigh the risks involved in using a relatively untried design.

While thirty-three more pairs were hurriedly made for the team and Sherpa porters, the scientists tackled an allied problem—finding a dressing which would keep boots supple and waterproof and would not freeze at 23,000 feet and beyond.

THOUGH, on first reflection, it might appear difficult for the layman to see how scientific research can be applied to so mundane an object as a pair of shoes, there is little doubt that the comfort of the nation's feet owes a great deal to SATRA scientists. Whether we be nine or ninety, they have helped to make our lives pleasanter. What they have achieved and learned is amazing. For instance, statistics collected after prolonged visits to Bristol, Norwich, and Sunderland show that in the north the average person's foot is broader than in the Midlands or the south of England—a peculiar fact, but nevertheless a true one.

More perturbing, however, are the results of an analysis of the feet of 999 Yorkshire children. The experts found that 61 per cent of the boys and 83 per cent of the girls were wearing shoes too short for them and a very high proportion had foot defects. It is now possible that, before long, extending shoes for the rapidly-growing feet of a child will be on sale. The shoes could grow up as the children grew older, thus safeguarding their health and the pocket of their parents.

Because of experiments now completed, it is possible that some football teams will owe part of any new success to the Association. Following investigations made at the request of the Football Association, no longer need footballers suffer the agony of breaking in new boots. On a fact-finding visit to Norwich City Football Club it was found that players wore new boots which were too small and too tight, simply to overcome the stretching of the uppers after a few games, making the boots sloppy and useless for controlling the ball.

Discussions with the players were supplemented by the shooting of an action film, which was later analysed, and now a new boot has been designed. Players with Luton Town, Northampton Town, Norwich City, and Tottenham Hotspur tested them out and gave favourable verdicts. Shape-retaining properties are so good that the boots need not be too short or too tight when fitted and they are very easy to break in. In addition,

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

adequate clearance over the toes and a well-defined instep curve enable the instep to be used for kicking with the leg in a more natural position than with conventional boots.

Indelicate as it might seem, bunions have been given battle. It was decided to find out how normal foot measurements differed from bunion measurements. Between 50 and 100 women employed in a West Country shoe factory were chosen for the tests. On each foot examined 26 measurements were recorded. Now it has to be faced that a high proportion of them had toes out of alignment or bunions. But the charge that the shoe industry is careless about the cause of bunions will no longer hold water after some very detailed work the Association has sponsored.

IN many of its investigations SATRA uses local people as guinea-pigs. As many as 200 people at a time, ranging from firemen to policemen, from postmen to furnace workers, have co-operated. A dustman can be found making his rounds in boots soled with a certain type of leather. A waitress whisks between her tables wearing shoes with secret soles. Schoolboys and schoolgirls kick their toes out in playgrounds. And at the end of a specified period back go the shoes to yield their stories to the experts.

From exhaustive tests made in the laboratories, wearing qualities are noted, analysis is made of a sole fashioned, perhaps, of a synthetic resin, plastic, or some other new material, which one day soon may give the country a lead in an international manufacturing race. Incidentally, it is estimated that 50 per cent of the shoes on American feet have soles made of synthetics—a matter of great concern to tanners and shoe-repairers.

Important information of this type is given up by weird and wonderful machines, mainly

invented by the scientists themselves. In one room, for example, a research worker walks at a steady four miles an hour against a rolling platform moved by electric motors. He is an enthusiast on perspiration, a constant cause of shoe deterioration. Further along the corridor, in another department, a smart young lady strolls about in front of a film-camera. The film-strips taken in slow motion give detailed analysis of foot and leg movements. A viewer which projects the films on to the under-surface of a glass plate enables the films to be studied in detail, frame by frame.

From an adjoining laboratory comes the dull thump of a falling weight. Safety boots are being tested. The boots must withstand the impact of heavy loads dropped from a specified height without the front portion distorting in such a way that the toes could be crushed or caught.

Adhesives, too, are given the third degree. Strips of leather which have been stuck together are subjected to an ageing test. Warmth, wetting, and drying are applied at regular intervals. In another spacious room infra-red heating equipment is being used for welding soles directly to the uppers. In the corner another expert is engrossed in the virtues of a plastic, polyvinyl chloride. Two layers of this transparent material have sandwiched between them an open cotton lace, making a most unusual upper for a woman's shoe.

The SATRA scientists in thirty-four years have accomplished many things—eliminated much of the hit-and-miss element in fitting, given safety and comfort to millions, aided in the 'export or die' drive, and, having proved that research is not a harmless foible, launched manufacturers into a synthetics age. All that—yet surveys taken show that, generally speaking, women cannot make a knot in a shoe-lace that will stay tied!

The Heights

*Poets and dreamers—we.
Painters of rainbows, carvers of wood,
Shapers of stones—vision enthrones.
Claiming the heights to see,
Measuring infinity,
Grasping the peaks—we!*

*Poets and dreamers—we.
Drawers of water, hewers of wood,
Breakers of stones—humanity groans.
But the path o'er the hill is free,
Maybe a sunset to see,
Night's lull o'er earth and me!*

ADELINA LANDSBERT.



Peat-Fire Memories

V.—The Village School

KENNETH MACDONALD

THE school was situated at the extreme east end of the village, in order to be more central for the children from M——, who had to travel over a mile from the opposite direction. There was a road to the school, which these children could take, but it was the long way round, and they preferred the short-cut over a stretch of wet, marshy moorland.

The school opened at ten o'clock in the morning, and the ringing of the school bell, which stood in a small belfry at the gable end, could be heard a long way off. From March to October practically all the children were barefoot and also bareheaded. The children who had to come from the remoter villages could not get home for dinner, and the piece of oatcake or scone they took with them for a play-piece was often eaten long before play-time. Large hard biscuits could be bought in the local village shop for a halfpenny, if you had one.

Each pupil had to carry a peat to school each day, for if you did not you would not be allowed near the fire. There were plenty of peats, but carrying one on a cold frosty morning with numbed fingers was not a very pleasant job. Many of the boys, however, did not carry one from home as there were plenty

of peat-stacks on the way to school, and one occasional peat would not be missed. But when all the odd peats came out of the one stack, and that was the one nearest to the school, the drain was soon felt. That was the reason why Alasdair Enag stood by his peat-stack every morning until the school had gone in.

ON entering the main door of the school you came into a porch where the rows of pegs indicated that it was a place for hanging coats or caps. We had neither, and the pegs in the boys' end were always empty. The girls, who occupied the same porch, were more fortunate, for an odd peg was occupied at their end.

There were only two rooms. They were large, spacious, uncomfortable, and cold. Each room had one fireplace, with a large wooden box beside it. Each boy as he came in banged his peat with all his might against the side of the box as if glad to get rid of it, and also to draw the master's attention to the fact that he had brought one.

The desks were about 14 feet long, with no back supports. About eight boys sat in each

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

desk. There were holes for inkwells, but they were always empty, as the boys used to take them for drinking-cups for the bird-cage. There was also a long groove in the desk for the slate-pencils, and a slot in front to hold the slate. The desk itself was carved all over with names. Probably every boy who ever passed through the school aspired at least to have his initials or his nickname carved in his desk and slate.

The slates were squared on one side and plain on the other. Sometimes we were allowed to take them home before the inspector's visit in order to scrub down the frame. The girls were more hygienic than the boys, for they always carried a wet rag to clean their slates. The boys just spat on them and gave them a good rub with the right sleeve. The result was that the jersey, which nearly all boys wore, showed first signs of wear and tear on the right sleeve.

The ventilators were flat holed iron plates in the floor at intervals of about 12 feet, and a gale of wind blew up through them, and punishments included standing for a period on the ventilator. More painfully the master used a cane about 3 feet long and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter. Its swish could be heard cutting the air before it made the contact. It always left a mark, but nobody seemed to worry. It was considered good for one to get a good thrashing. A revolt by a pupil was an unheard-of thing, and parents never complained. In fact, the great ideal was to take what was coming and not to wince. The ventilators, I may say, had another purpose. They offered a fine receptacle to drop the hated cane through, down below the floor. The opportunities were many, and they were always taken, and the floor ventilators became a veritable canes' graveyard.

There seemed to be no scale of punishments. It all depended on the master's temper. I remember as a boy of 9 getting three on each hand for having my eyes open at the prayer, and I had sufficient sense to realise that the master's eyes must have been open also or he couldn't have seen me.

One Sunday two boys were seen playing on the shore. It was, of course, reported to the headmaster, who decided to make an example of the boys. On Monday morning he ordered the two culprits out to the floor. He then got the two biggest boys in the school to take them round the classes on their backs, so that every other boy could spit on their faces. One of the

big boys was the school bully and he simply delighted in this job. Each boy did his duty as told, but when the bully came to Seumas Ban, Seumas, who was no friend of the bully's, hesitated, rolled his tongue backwards and forwards several times in his mouth as if gathering a big one—and then, deliberately missing his aim, clapped the spittal with deadly accuracy into the bully's ear.

THE language was a constant difficulty. The native language was Gaelic, but the medium of instruction was English. We could just say 'yes' and 'no' in English, and often did not know what the teacher was talking about. The result was that when we left school we had only poor English or an Anglicised Gaelic. Naturally we thought in Gaelic and translated into English, whence the English constructions used by Gaelic speakers which sound so odd and strange to English ears. Gaelic is full of idioms which when translated literally make very comic English.

Uilleann Mac—was plodding through his arithmetic questions, and not doing so badly, but he could not understand averages. The teacher tried his best to explain what 'on an average' meant, but the 'on' seemed to stump William. At last the teacher asked him in Gaelic: 'Have you got hens at home?' 'Yes,' came the reply. 'Are they laying?' 'Yes,' came the answer again. 'Well,' explained the teacher, 'suppose your mother went to the barn on Monday and got 5 eggs, on Tuesday 2, Wednesday 6, Thursday 4, and Friday 3. Now that is 20 eggs she would get in 5 days.' 'Yes,' replied William. 'That is just the same as if she got 4 eggs regularly every day, isn't it?' 'Yes,' again muttered William. 'Well, then, we say your mother was getting 4 eggs on an average each day. Do you follow now what we mean when we say "on an average."?' William nodded, but knew that their hens did not lay 'on an average.' 'What is meant now by "on an average"?' asked the teacher. Poor William answered: 'The boxes the hens lay the eggs in.' The teacher, exasperated, told him he had a head like a pot of porridge.

HOLIDAYS were arranged to fit in with peat-cutting, sowing, and harvest. A 'whipper-in' went round the houses each day to ask why John or Murdo was not at school. He had a notebook in which he wrote down

PEAT-FIRE MEMORIES

all the excuses. It was a strange collection—watching the baby, mother in peats, gathering winkles, in town with father's dinner, ploughing the croft, or trousers being washed.

Boots were a luxury and were only worn in winter. In many cases one was better without them, because the boys waded through all the puddles and had wet feet all day. On receipt of a new pair of boots, the first test was to wade into a deep pool and see how many eyelets were watertight. And proud was he who had a row of tackets in the sole more than the others.

Laces went in tatters in a very short time, and as the lace got shorter there was not sufficient left to put a running-knot on it. So a granny was the easiest, and it never opened. But there was a time of reckoning at bedtime. Wading in the puddles all day soaked and swelled the laces, with the result that the granny was as tight as if Samson himself had pulled the ends together. The handiest marlin-spike was a fork from the table-drawer or from the box on the dresser. A prong of the fork would be squeezed in between the strands of the knot and an attempt made to loosen them. But invariably there was only one solution, and that was to cut the knot. And so the laces got shorter and shorter, until finally there was only enough remaining to tie the two holes at the top. Sometimes we raided the small-line, which was hanging in hanks on the loft. One snood would do for both boots, and it would not be missed before the following spring. We were always prepared for a court-martial at that time.

THE examination day was a field-day and we all looked forward to it. The inspectors arrived then, as now, unannounced. But surprise visits did not work in the Isles. There was only one way of arriving, and that was by the boat at night. Practically everybody goes down to see who is coming off the boat, and to get the morning papers at night. The inspectors, of course, were well known and word was round the island by next morning that they had arrived. So every scholar was in his place and the school looked a hive of industry.

The girls were nicely dressed for the occasion, with clean white pinnies, and coloured ribbons in their hair. The boys gave their boots the annual overhaul. And what a job! The blacking was usually as hard as a brick, so you spat and spat on it, until some adhered to the brush. The boots had to be dried at the fire and finally some kind of polish was achieved. When there was no blacking, sugar and milk were put in a saucer and used instead.

There were no motor-cars in these days, so the inspectors had to hire a trap for long distances, and all distances are long in the Isles. As a rule, they were taken into the schoolhouse for their lunch. The classes were examined one by one and everybody passed. The ultimate aim was to get the Merit Certificate. The staff had no secondary or college education as we know it to-day, yet it is amazing the number of boys and girls from the Isles who reached executive posts all over the world.

A Cotswold Inn

*In Spring, when I smell woodsmoke on the breeze,
During the twilight when the stars begin
To peep above green lanes and apple-trees,
I see the Windrush by a Cotswold inn . . .*

*Gently the river flows, and through the door
A log-fire burns beside an old oak stair;
Gently faint footsteps tap across the floor,
For years of Springs have left their phantoms there.*

*And, far away, I dream of inn and river,
And village street, and moonlight on the hill,
And know that as it was, it is for ever—
Old England in its unspoilt beauty still.*

JOAN POMFRET.



The Kind Lady

LAURENCE KIRK

EXECUTORS sometimes come across odd and embarrassing things when they are clearing up papers that concern an estate. There may be love-letters, unexplained bills, dance-programmes, even handkerchiefs that still have a lingering suggestion of scent. Sadly enough, the best thing generally is to put them straight into the wastepaper-basket. I didn't expect anything embarrassing when Miss Armitage died. She was ninety-two and the sweetest of old ladies. But I did think it odd when I came across a number of newspaper-wrappers with the name Mr Patrick O'Flynn and an address in County Cork printed on them.

I didn't really suspect Miss Armitage of carrying on an elderly flirtation with some gentleman in County Cork. Flirtatious people don't send newspapers to each other. They write letters and write them in their own hand. But there were the newspaper-wrappers—nineteen of them, to be exact. Why were they already printed like that? And what newspaper or magazine was it that went regularly to County Cork?

The clue was there, if I had been able to recognise it, when I was going through the receipted bills. There was a receipt for a year's subscription for *The Fishing Chronicle*. Two

pounds nine and three it was. It did seem strange to me that an old lady of ninety-two should sit up by her fireside reading *The Fishing Chronicle*. But stranger things can happen in the world, and I didn't connect it in any way with Mr Patrick O'Flynn.

Miss Armitage had a very faithful old maid called Kate. She was eighty-seven and nearly stone-deaf. I might have consulted her earlier if she hadn't been so deaf. But she always shouted at me as though I were the deaf one and it was very difficult to arrive at any conclusion with her. Anyway, one day when I was at the flat doing some more clearing up I was surprised to find a paper on the hall table already done up in one of the wrappers addressed to Mr Patrick O'Flynn. 'What's this?' I demanded of Kate.

'Why, *The Chronicle*, of course,' she shouted back.

'What *Chronicle*?'

'*The Fishing Chronicle*.'

'So that's what goes to Mr Patrick O'Flynn!' I exclaimed.

'Why, of course it is, sir. Miss Armitage was always telling me never to let her forget *The Chronicle* for Mr O'Flynn.'

'I see. Do you know anything else about Mr O'Flynn?'

THE KIND LADY

'No, sir. Nothing except that he can't read.'

'He can't read!'

'No, I believe it's his daughter who reads *The Chronicle* to him.'

'How long has this been going on for, Kate?'

'Why, ever since Mr Henry died. It was he who had the wrappers made. He was always a great one for having things printed.'

'But that was over forty years ago, wasn't it?'

'Forty-one, sir.'

'And he had been sending *The Chronicle* himself for some time before he died?'

'Oh yes. Ten or fifteen years, I should say. Can't tell exactly as I've only been with the family forty-nine years myself.'

'Did Mr O'Flynn ever write and thank Miss Armitage for *The Chronicle*?'

'I don't think so, sir. I don't think he could write either.'

'But she went on sending it all this time?'

'Oh yes, sir. Most particular she was about it.'

'But if he had a daughter who was able to read *The Chronicle* he can't have been a very young man.'

'Why, no, sir, I don't think he was. As I understand it, he was a very old one.'

MY niece Susan takes a great interest in all human affairs and I told her the whole story that evening. It was fairly obvious that Patrick O'Flynn was either a boatman or a gillie. Henry Armitage had been a keen fisherman and no doubt had had the happy idea of passing on *The Chronicle* to him after he had finished with it. We liked the picture of the daughter reading it aloud in the smoky little cottage as though it were the Holy Book itself.

But it was the arithmetical side of the problem that really interested us. We knew for a fact that *The Chronicle* had been crossing the Irish Sea for at least fifty years, if not sixty. Again, if Patrick O'Flynn had a daughter who had learned to read, he could hardly be much less than forty at the time, and, if Kate was right, was probably a great deal more. That made him a hundred at least. What was going to happen to him if *The Chronicle* suddenly stopped coming? Would he die of a broken heart? Or had he died years ago, and was it perhaps the postmistress who undid the

wrapper and sold *The Chronicle* to the highest bidder?

Susan said it was quite easy to find out. I needed a holiday. She had always wanted to go to Ireland. What was simpler than to fly over by Aer Lingus and spend a couple of weeks at Shenallion. With any luck we'd not only find out the real age of Patrick O'Flynn but catch our first salmon as well.

Susan generally gets what she wants, and so one May evening we found ourselves driving up to the fishing-inn at Shenallion. It was a moist, happy-go-lucky place, just where a green valley widened out into a blue lake. Nothing happened if you rang a bell. If you asked for anything, they were all over you. Sure, they'd attend to it that very minute—but you never knew which minute they meant. One of the clocks showed summer time, another God's time, while the third had stopped at five minutes past three.

The pieces had been fitting quite neatly into the jigsaw puzzle and it wasn't long before the picture began to grow.

THE next morning when we asked if there was a boatman who would take us out on the lake we got the answer we wanted. Patrick O'Flynn, they informed us, was the very man we were looking for, and we'd find him down on the shore near the three mountain-ashes we had passed on the way up.

When we got to the place there was a young man lying against one of the mountain-ashes on his back, reading a newspaper. He was more like what they called the broth of a boy than a gnarled old centenarian, and we didn't pay much attention to him at first. However, he heard us when we came near and suddenly jumped to his feet. 'Ye'll be wantin' a row out on this fine lake,' he said eagerly. 'I can see it in your eye.'

Susan had already taken a snoop look at the paper. It was *The Fishing Chronicle* all right—the number we had sent only a week before. Nevertheless she still wanted to make sure. 'Are you Mr Patrick O'Flynn?' she asked.

'Sure, that's who I am,' he answered. 'Who else could I be?'

He was already pushing the boat into the water by this time, and very soon he was rowing us lazily across the smooth sunny waters of the lake.

I then tried to fit a few more pieces into the

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

puzzle. 'What was that you were reading when we came up?' I asked.

'Why, it was *The Chronicle*, sorr. And a mighty fine paper it is.'

'Do you get it specially sent out from London?'

'There's no need for me to do that, sorr. A kind lady sends it to me. It's there waitin' for me every week at the post-office.'

'And you like reading the paper?'

'Oh, I wouldn't know what to do without it, sorr.'

He went on rowing for some seconds; then some idea occurred to him and he put down the oars. 'Ye'll be from London yourselves as likely as not?'

'We are,' I said.

'Then ye must know Miss Armitage. Ye couldn't help knowin' a fine lady like that.'

'Well, London's rather a large place, Patrick.'

'But even if ye didn't know her, ye must have seen her in the streets. Ye couldn't miss her with her blue eyes and fine strappin' walk.'

I felt sad for a moment. Miss Armitage's blue eyes had lasted till the end; but it was a good many years since she had had a fine strapping walk. 'How do you know so much about this lady?' I asked. 'When did you last see her?'

He started slowly to row again. 'Oh, I never saw her in me life, sorr, more's the pity. It was me father who told me about her, but he never saw her either.'

'Was his name Patrick O'Flynn?'

'Sure it was, sorr. There's always a Patrick O'Flynn down here at Shenallion.'

'But if your father never saw her...'

Patrick rested on his oars again. 'It was like this, sorr,' he said. 'It was me grandfather who used to go out with Mr Henry Armitage. Ah, there was a fine gentleman and what a great fisherman, too! No one's ever killed a salmon like the one he caught up the river over there. Twenty-nine pounds and four ounces it was. Of course, there have been bigger fish killed, but they weren't Shenallion fish, and that makes a difference.'

'Was the lady, Miss Armitage, with him when he caught this fish?'

'Sure she was, sorr. That's how I know about her blue eyes and fine strappin' walk. Me grandfather couldn't stop talkin' about her.'

'And was that when they first started sending *The Chronicle*?'

'It was, indeed, and this is how it happened. He killed that salmon the very last day he was here that year. It was about a month later that the paper arrived, and there was the whole story of it with the name of Patrick O'Flynn in big printed letters. Nothing like that had ever happened to me grandfather before, and he got Father O'Brien to write a letter sayin' how happy he was to have *The Chronicle* and what a fine gentleman Mr Henry was to send it.'

'And they went on sending it after that?'

'They did, sorr. And when Mr Henry died, God rest his soul, *The Chronicle* still came with the same wrapper. So it must have been the kind lady who sent it, if it wasn't Almighty God Himself.'

I didn't want to spoil the day by telling him that the kind lady had died and that there was now no one to send him *The Chronicle*. I don't think I would have done so in any case; but Susan has a kind of private radar in her eyes and she now gave me the signal that I was to keep silent.

PATRICK O'FLYNN now indulged in a little sales-talk about the fishing. If we had never fished before, he said, perhaps it would be better not to start with the salmon. But he'd get us a salmon before we ever left Shenallion or his name wasn't Patrick O'Flynn. Sure, he had all the tackle we needed. Why, there was Mr Henry's own rod, which the kind lady had sent when he died, God rest his soul.

I had fibrositis in my shoulder and I didn't feel like doing any fishing. But he got Susan pinned down to coming out with him at nine o'clock next day, and then he rested on his oars and went on talking. 'Ye'll be surprised how one thing leads to another,' he said solemnly. 'It's entirely thanks to Mr Henry and *The Chronicle* that I became a lettured man.'

We didn't quite know what he meant by lettured and we remained silent.

'Yes, it is indeed,' he went on. 'The O'Flynnns were never great ones for book-learning—at least only the womenfolk. We didn't think it was very daicent for a man to learn to read and write. But me grandfather had a cunning way with him and he used to sit me on his knee and ask if I wouldn't like to be readin' *The Chronicle* meself when I grew up. And when I said yes, that I would, he pointed out that if I had to wait until I was married and then have a daughter to grow up

THE KIND LADY

and learn to read, I'd be missin' a great many numbers of *The Chronicle*. There was no arguin' against that kind of thing, so I learned to read and write so that I could be readin' *The Chronicle*. And I've read other things, too, but none of them are as important as *The Chronicle*.'

'Your grandfather must have been a very wise man.'

'Ah, indeed he was that, a great deal wiser than me father, God rest his soul. He went and got himself shot in the time of the trouble.'

'Dear me, I hope it wasn't the English!'

'No, indeed it was not. It was another rebel he got into a dispute with after the English had gone. Me father was a very troublous man, God rest his soul. There were disputes even between him and me grandfather when the English were here. Grandfather said that it wasn't right to go out shootin' Englishmen when the kind English lady was sendin' *The Chronicle* every week. If he had to go on shootin' the English, then he ought to give up *The Chronicle* and break all their hearts. But father couldn't give up *The Chronicle*, and he couldn't very well stop shootin' the English either. Once ye start being a rebel it isn't very safe to give it up. Not at Shenallion, anyway. But I don't think he ever hit one, and that's a blessing. Just when he was takin' his aim he always remembered *The Chronicle* and then somehow or another the shot went wide. That kind lady must have saved a lot of English lives without knowin' it.'

SUSAN got her salmon all right. It didn't weigh twenty-nine pounds four ounces; but it was a fine Shenallion fish, and I gather that was as good as one double the weight elsewhere. However, it didn't look like her getting a salmon or anything else when we started. The face of Patrick O'Flynn was a study when she began thrashing at the water. 'Oh, glory be,' he exclaimed, 'ye'll never make them come to ye like that!' He took the rod from her hands and made a few casts in his own gentle coaxing manner. 'Ye see,' he went on, 'it's a bit of blarney that's wanted. The fish like a lot of flattery. So ye do it like this, as though ye were singin' a lullaby to a baby or shtrokin' a favourite cat. If ye do it this way and listen carefully ye'll be hearin' the watter purr.'

I don't think Susan ever quite made the water purr, but she caught her first small trout the third day, and a bigger one the next. It was almost as though Patrick selected the fish she was to catch, for each one was larger than the last, and when she finally caught a three-pounder he said she was ready to use the heavier rod and go up the river to where Mr Henry had caught the fish that had started it all.

That was the second-last day of our stay. Susan found the heavier rod a little unwieldy and the water didn't purr much that day. But we heard all about that first famous fish. It was the same rod and the same kind of fly—a Patrick O'Flynn Especial. Mr Henry had been standing on the same outcrop of rock just where the smooth dark water of the pool began to squeeze itself into motion. The shadows were creeping down the bank on the other side and there was a pheasant a-leppin' and roarin' in the woods behind.

I had never heard a pheasant do that, but I heard it the next day. Patrick was beginning to look a little anxious as the shadows crept down the bank. He had been saying all day that Susan would get her fish when the sun was over a certain birch-tree. Now the sun was beyond the birch-tree, and nothing had happened. But then suddenly there was a pheasant a-leppin and roarin' in the woods behind us and almost at the same time Susan was struggling frantically with the rod bent double.

After that, events moved so fast that I don't remember what happened. Patrick was cheering, groaning, shouting instructions. Susan battled with the writhing, rebellious rod. All I know is that the pool from which we finally landed the fish was quite a different pool from the one where we had started. How we got from one to the other I simply can't tell. But Susan was almost weeping with excitement, and there was a nine-pound salmon on the grass beside us.

PATRICK O'FLYNN'S last words to us were that we were to be sure to find the kind lady and to thank her for going on sending *The Chronicle*. We said that we would try our utmost to do this, and he stood waving his cap till we were out of sight.

I have never felt more satisfied with any holiday than I was with those few days at Shenallion. Not only had we added a nine-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

pound salmon to our luggage. It was much more than that. Old acquaintance was not to be forgotten, nor pleasant customs discontinued. I am happy when I wrap up *The Chronicle* each week and send it across the

Irish Sea. And I know that when I die Susan will take it on, and no doubt her children after her. For there will always be a Patrick O'Flynn, just as there will always be an England.

Dorothy's Poems

The Romance of Mrs Craik

ALEX J. PHILIP

SOME years ago, as a kindly gift from a friend, I became possessed of a small book entitled *Dorothy's Poems*. She, my friend, even then very old, gave me a few facts about the little olive-green book, but not many; and some of her information was vague and quite unreliable. She believed herself to be about ninety years old at the time of her death. If this were so, she would have carried her memory well back to Mrs Craik's literary period.

Since the poems came to me, I have spent time, whenever I could spare it, in gathering further scraps of information to add to those I already had about the book, the poems, their author, and particularly about Dorothy herself.

As to the book—twenty-four copies were printed, but, as Mrs Craik explains, never published. These, or some of them, were given to the more intimate friends of the family. But all my inquiries have failed to find anyone who had, or has, another copy. It appears likely that mine is the only copy in existence, and that, one might say, only by chance.

As to the authoress—Mrs Craik, or Miss Dinah Maria Mulock as she was when she first began to write, became one of the foremost of that pioneer band of women novelists who distinguished the early and middle years of the Victorian Age. In her day she was a

contributor to this magazine. Most of the novelists are now forgotten, but their influence had a lasting effect on the literature of our country. The publication of new books by Miss Braddon, Mrs Henry Wood, Miss Worboise (Emma Jane, to her readers), Mrs Stannard (John Strange Winter), and others, were literary events of importance. There are still those who remember Mrs Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman*. It was a best-seller for many years and continued to sell well into the present century.

As is the case with so many of these Victorian novelists, very little is known of Mrs Craik's personal or private life. Most of the information available is contained in a history of the Mellard family by Thomas Mellard Reade. This is a handsome quarto book containing some two hundred and sixty-six pages. Only two hundred copies of this work were printed and the type was then distributed. Mr Reade has generously given me permission to make use of the material of his book.

With this information, and the judicious use of other sometimes meagre and often contradictory material, I have been able to put together a brief account of Mrs Craik's life, and to make a picture of her barren outlook, starved for the love of children and the sound of their merry laughter until Dorothy, saved from a dreadful fate, became, as Mrs Craik

DOROTHY'S POEMS

herself said, more important to her than the writing of novels.

MRS CRAIK was born on 20th April 1826, at Longfield Cottage, Hartshill, between Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-upon-Trent. It was not until six years later that she was baptised Dinah Maria Mulock at the parish church of Stoke. Her mother had been Dinah Mellard before she married Thomas Samuel Mulock. This was Dinah Maria's connection with the Mellards. Her mother died in 1845, five years after the family had moved to London, at one time living at 14 Earl's Court Terrace. The father, after this, metaphorically washed his hands of his responsibilities; he left the children to their own devices and refused to contribute anything towards their support. He was described as being eccentric, which quite possibly is an understatement.

Dinah had inherited her father's ability to write. It was this flair for the pen that helped her to supplement the trust fund by which the 'little mother' supported the family for some time. She was well known in the world of letters when she married George Lillie Craik in 1865. Dinah was nearly forty years old, while her husband was only twenty-eight. Craik belonged to another literary family and later became a junior partner in the famous publishing house of Macmillan. The story of Mrs Craik's marriage is another romantic tale for which there is no room here; but the tragedy of it was that the two had no children. When 'The Corner House' was built at Shortlands, near Bromley in Kent, principally from the money that Mrs Craik had earned by her novels, provision was made for a nursery, which was never occupied by their own children.

Now, on the 1st of January 1869, Dorothy enters. Literally, she was regarded, as the name implies, as 'the gift of God' by the childless couple. She was picked up half-frozen in the road near Beckenham Church. Naturally, perhaps, she was taken to the workhouse.

There were several accounts of the finding; one of these described the little baby girl as having a brick tied round her neck, just like a kitten or a puppy ready to be thrown into the water and drowned. But all doubt is set aside by the first of the poems in the little green book before me:

My New Year's Gift

January 2nd, 1869

*A Baby without a mother,
A woman without a child—
We looked in each other's faces
And our guardian angels smiled;
And I heard the saints and martyrs,
Sitting high, undefiled,
Say, 'Child, behold thy mother!'
And, 'Mother, behold thy child!'*

*So I took her into my bosom,
To carry her through the world;
And shield her from every arrow
By sin or folly hurled.
My white lamb—lost in a snow-drift,
My lily-flower, well-nigh trod
Into dust by the feet of the wicked—
My Dorothy—gift of God!*

*I know not what race she sprang from—
I cannot tell what she may grow;
But now she is God's and mine only,
And that is enough to know.
So I clasp her close to my bosom;
And I laugh at all vain alarms;
If I make her life worth living,
I may die in Dorothy's arms.*

Mrs Craik prefaces the little book with the following few lines: 'I have put into verse these literally true incidents of the first (known) year of my little girl's life, to record how sweet and dear her babyhood was; also, that, whether or not I live to see her womanhood, they may help her, please God, to grow up a good woman.'

None of the eighteen poems in the book is of very high literary standard; but they are all vibrant with the passionate maternal yearning of a childless wife. Her husband was not so keen on the adoption as Dinah was, but he eventually 'gave his consent.'

It is curious, perhaps, that there are no further poems—in fact, few enough records of any kind in later years. The baby girl is described as being about nine months old, 'a dainty little soul, big blue eyes, very small hands and feet . . . evidently a lady's child.' No one, parents or others, came forward to claim the child. Some months after the adoption, a friend, a Mrs Howitt, wrote describing the child as 'the embodiment of health and infantile beauty, fair and rosy, and with beautifully moulded limbs, long fingers, and golden-tinged hair. She can just run alone,

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

has the most winning ways, and, if she had determined to show herself off to advantage, could not have been more fascinating than she was.' Is it surprising that in these early days Mrs Craik said that looking after Dorothy was 'twenty thousand times better than writing novels'?

I have not been able to find anything about Dorothy by her 'adopted father,' Craik himself, although one of the poems describes him bringing home

*A cart so grandly made,
It threw all other common carts
Completely in the shade.*

NOTHING is recorded as having been found to throw any light on the questions of the greatest importance: Who was Dorothy? Why was she abandoned?

Dorothy herself was very real, very living, and one or two letters reveal the closeness between her and her 'mama,' the Victorian word that meant so much in this case. The years passed, and Dorothy was to be married; and Mrs Craik was dying. Her great regret was that she could not be present at Dorothy's wedding.

Mrs Craik died on 12th October 1887. Dorothy married Alexander John McDonnell Pilkington on 8th November in the same year. Pilkington was a distant relative. From his father's honours and degrees—J.P., D.L., Q.C., M.A., LL.D.—it appears that the family was a worthy one. Nearly a quarter of a century later, in 1911, Pilkington divorced his wife, Dorothy.

I have no desire to tear apart the veil that has shrouded some of the years of Dorothy's life, either before or after her marriage. My endeavour has been to consider these poems about Dorothy as revealing the most romantic part of the life and character of one of the most successful and best known of the band of women novelists who 'found themselves' and made a new career for their sex in Victorian times.

The end of the story is more definite than some of the earlier periods, apart from the fact that there is some slight doubt as to the exact date of the divorce, due possibly to

the legal lapse between the decrees. Dorothy had been living with her husband in Ireland. After the divorce she went to Italy, and ultimately came back to England. She married again—a Mr Richards—and died in 1936. She left one, possibly two, children.

AS I look at the little olive-green book before me, I wonder if in all the world it is the only link, just this one little book, with the mother-hunger of a plain woman and the dignity of a literary woman, at one time of world-wide fame.

The book is five and a quarter inches tall and four and a quarter inches across. It is lettered in gold within a border on the flat of the front cover. There are eight pages of introductory matter and fifty-six pages of poetry.

I have already said the poems are not of a high literary standard, but they breathe a rapture that could not have been greater if Dorothy had been her own child in actual fact. They are a pæan of the mother-love of a childless woman comforted to the depths of her longing and the immensity of her desire.

A year after the finding of Dorothy, a first birthday poem of some considerable length, dated 1st January 1870, includes the following verses:

*Once, a poor little babe lay sleeping,
Out in the moonlight road;
As the old year died, it woke and cried,
None listened—save one, God.*

*He heard, and He sent His angels
To stand with their shining wings—
As white as the snow that fell soft and slow—
And keep off all hurtful things.*

*The tears, to icicles turning,
Froze over each pallid cheek;
Her cold little hand clutched the earth and
the sand,
And her heart beat faint and weak:*

*And a cruel north wind howling
Swept over the soft bare breast;
One brief hour more, and all pain had been
o'er
And the baby quite at rest. . .*

Stoke Meadow

The Story of a Fattening Pasture

T. BEDFORD FRANKLIN

THE sward of a typical Midland fattening pasture is made up largely of rye-grass and wild white clover, growing in deep alluvial soil which rests on Lias clay. The fertile well-drained alluvial soil, the high water-table imposed by the Lias clay, the warm Midland summer sunshine, and the winter floods all provide the conditions exactly suited to the perpetual growth of a rye-grass clover pasture.

These fattening pastures are mostly over a hundred years old. Sir James Caird in his *English Agriculture in 1850-51* (1852) mentions them and draws a distinction between them and the inferior pastures on the lighter upland soils better adapted to milk and cheese production. In his report on Northamptonshire Caird refers to the rich pastures in the valleys of the Welland and the Nene.

The pastures themselves bear record in most certain fashion to the days when they were arable and ploughed by oxen. Many of them lie in high-backed ridge and furrow, with long curves at the headlands, showing how much space in turning was taken by the long string of oxen required to plough what is known to-day as 'four-horse land.' Probably most of the pastures were self-sown, for, thanks to the excellent indigenous grasses of the Midland district, fallow ground soon covered itself with a rye-grass and clover sward. It is on record that a field in Rutland took only eight years to transform itself from a wheat stubble into a first-class pasture, with no help at all except a little red clover undersown in the wheat.

These pastures, though a hundred years old, were still in their prime when the farmers were given orders in the Second World War that they were to be ploughed up to grow corn, potatoes, and sugar-beet. When the news came to the five Langton parishes near Market Harborough, which contained within their

bounds the finest grassland in the world, it was received with consternation. The graziers were aghast at the idea of destroying fields of rye-grass and clover as rich as cake, and their wives and children, who knew nearly as much about grass management as the farmers, almost wept at the idea. But the world had gone mad, and madness apparently had to be fought by other madness, and farmers who had no ploughs, no arable experience, and no buildings suited to arable farming had to go to school again and learn the secrets of growing corn, potatoes, and sugar-beet as best they could, while their bullocks disappeared, except in a few meadows where the annual floods saved the pastures from the plough.

The work of a hundred years was to be destroyed in a night; the promise that it could be restored in a very short time by new seeds and new methods of growing them was the only consolation the farmers had—a consolation in which few of them really believed. Nevertheless, in spite of the heartbreak, the job was done, to the accompaniment of the smiles of neighbouring mixed farmers, who had always been a little jealous of the freedom of what they called the 'dog and stick farming' of the graziers. And the graziers, turned for the time into mixed farmers, settled down to eat their heart out for the end of the war, when they would be able to return to their normal and well-known way of life.

In these days it may seem curious that any farmer should wish to keep going pastures already a hundred years old, but there are several good reasons for this. Ploughing up an old pasture and reseeded it in the hot summers of the Midlands was an expensive and chancy business and was summed up in the saying 'to make a pasture breaks a man.' In the old days the modern strains of grass,

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

bred for leaf rather than stalk, for long life and winter greenness, were not available; nor did the farmer know of the value of phosphates on grassland. There was, too, a certain fascination and pride in keeping up good pastures bequeathed by one's ancestors, and in trying to match one's skill and management against theirs, for, in spite of fertile soil, suitable sunshine and rainfall, and good indigenous herbage, farmers who had good fattening pastures knew that without good management the sward soon deteriorated, leaving the way clear for the poorer grasses to oust the rye-grass and clover and become dominant. In the management drama the chief actors were the scientific farmer and the grazing bullock.

STOKE MEADOW—our particular pasture—was a field of eighty acres between two branches of the river Tove in south Northamptonshire. It had never been ploughed, for it showed no high-backed ridge and furrow. At one time it was probably an island in the Liassic sea and had been cut off flat, right down to the Lias clay, by the glaciers of the Ice Age, and later had been covered with alluvium and clad with a forest of oak-trees. Father found and excavated the trunks of two large oaks, embedded in the Lias clay, when he dug holes for gate-posts in the meadow. They were so well preserved that there and then he made gate-posts out of them in place of the new ones already on hand for the job. They had been part of the forest, they had plenished the meadow with their leaves, and in the meadow, he decided, they should stay.

The melting ice had scoured two shallow channels on either side of the meadow, and through these channels, bordered by alder and willow and choked with sedge, the sluggish Tove had wound its way. Year by year the surface of the Lias clay had been covered by alluvium brought down by the winter floods, for the Tove is a tributary of the Great Ouse and has little enough fall on its long journey to the sea. And year by year a fertility of mixed alluvium and leaf-mould mounted up until the day when the forest was cut down and a grass meadow took its place.

There is no record of the cutting down of this forest area. In Domesday times it was an outlier on the south-western edge of Salcey Forest, which in those days covered about 40 square miles in Northamptonshire. Perhaps it was one of the many small pieces of

woodland that disappeared when the wool trade was so prosperous that woods and wastes were cleared and enclosed to make sheep-walks. Or perhaps its oak-trees were felled with many more in Salcey itself to make some of the ships that defeated the Spanish Armada. That by 1650 the island was a meadow seems to be certain, for it appears in a parliamentary survey of that date. Parcelled out to all the villagers, it was mown annually for hay, and so remained until the enclosure of Stoke Bruerne in 1845.

About 1854 Stoke Meadow came into the hands of my grandfather as part of the farm he rented from the Duke of Grafton. He realised its value as a pasture, stopped taking hay off it, and in a few years of manuring and controlled grazing he brought it to perfection as a fattening pasture, and began to win cups and prizes for prime bullocks fed on it against all comers at the local Christmas fat-stock shows. By 1875, when it came into father's hands, he estimated that the sward contained about 60 per cent of perennial rye-grass and wild white clover, both indigenous to the locality, and cocksfoot, meadow-foxtail, crested dogs'-tail, rough-stalked meadow-grass, red clover, and herbs as well.

To us children the meadow was a playground where in the winter we sailed our raft on the flood-waters or skated on the frozen pools left behind by the floods, and in the summer amused ourselves with fishing-rod or gun. Father naturally took a different view: to him it was the largest and best field on his 500-acre farm, which in any normal year could be relied on to pay the rent of the whole farm.

A WELL-KNOWN Market Harborough grazier writes: 'Grass grown in May should be eaten in May. Close grazing and good management have made these pastures of natural grasses what they are to-day. Many of them have been in grass for over a century and originally were probably self-sown, but fertility, naturally favourable conditions, and skilled management have made them world-famous. The best I have are 120 years old and still are first-class. The quality of the grassland in the Midlands seems to depend directly on the excellence of its management; some fields in the supposed good area fail in performance under a poor farmer, but respond immediately to the care of a skilled stock-farmer.'

STOKE MEADOW

Fifty years ago my father used much the same words in impressing upon me that bad management would soon ruin a first-class pasture even when everything else was favourable. He considered it all-important not to put bullocks on Stoke Meadow too early in the spring. Many a good pasture was ruined by impatience, and he had got past the stage of those less fortunate farmers who decided early in spring, by a process of wishful thinking, that there was enough grass for the bullocks to get their tongues round, and turned in their animals weeks too early. He refused to do this, and only started grazing when the sward was thick and growing well. If necessary he kept his new purchases on poorer fields and fed them on hay until the fattening pasture was ready, or he adopted the more convenient method of buying some store cattle every autumn and wintering them in the yards, so that he could keep them there until his pasture was ready.

The number of indications of the needs of a pasture that father kept in mind was amazing. The excessive use of a salt-lick by the cattle, the working of worms and moles, the foraging of rooks and starlings, counts of the kinds of grass and clover in a square foot, the growth of certain weeds, the presence of moss due to rabbits, the smell of the water flowing from the drains, the feel of the turf beneath his feet, the colours of the sward in winter and early spring, the licked coats of the grazing cattle—all these meant much to him and decided the treatment a field would be given when it fell below its own standard of performance.

To prevent rank growth, the clats were collected into a heap every few weeks and only returned to the pasture and spread by harrowing at the end of the season. Hedges were kept low so as not to shade too much grass; hedgerow trees were few and only enough to give some shade from the sun. Any persistent patches of rank grass that did not respond to other methods were scythed over. All this costly work showed the importance that was attached by the grazier to preventing any part of the sward from becoming old, unpalatable, and non-nutritious. At the end of the season the best pastures were given a final clean up, the clats were spread, and the fields shut up for several months until the next spring.

Many graziers found that their grass needed little more manure than was provided by the grazing animal; some gave a dressing of basic slag every five years, but generally the cake fed

to the bullocks in the autumn, the long winter rest, and the late start of grazing in the spring ensured the upkeep of the rye-grass and clover. Yet the soils were rich in nitrogen, phosphate, potash, and lime, and an analysis of the herbage reflected the soil fertility. The only troublesome weed was the buttercup. The magnificent state of the fences and drinking-places showed the well-being of the whole area. A sure sign of the hold that good pasture management had on all concerned with the Midland area was the making of a special thistle-puller and a clat-spreader by the local blacksmith in the villages, where not only the graziers and their children, but the farm-workers and craftsmen also, were imbued with the knowledge of grass management.

AN important point, stressed by many graziers, was the matching of store cattle for breed, size, and condition at the beginning of the season; this was to ensure even fattening and to have all ready for sale at the same time. As a general rule, the bullocks sold fat in July gave the biggest profit, as they had fattened on grass alone and had required little attention, and the prices for fat cattle were highest then. The later groups from August to November had a ration of cake, but, even so, sold at lower prices at that time of year.

Lincoln Reds, Herefords, and Devons were favourite breeds for the early months, and hardier cattle, such as Aberdeen Angus, Shorthorns, or Hereford-Welsh crosses, for the autumn months. Choice of breed was dependent on the fancy of the grazier, yet as far back as 1794, L. Donaldson said: 'A bullock and sheep farm usually bought its cattle soon after Lady Day, usually Shropshire and Hereford bullocks, though some Scots and Welsh cattle were sometimes brought in.' But, though the breeds were much the same as they are now, the numbers bear no relation to present-day stocking, for he goes on to say: 'The stock on a farm comprising 70 acres of meadows and 170 of old pastures never exceeded 70 head.'

Donaldson does not mention the number of sheep on the pastures, but the use of sheep is an important part in the proper care and management of a fattening pasture. Sheep keep the sward more closely and evenly grazed and the fluctuations in the rate of growth of the grass can be allowed for by an increase or decrease in the number of sheep without dis-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

turbing the cattle by altering their number. In 1923 Sir Thomas Middleton gave it as his opinion that the richest pastures would only produce about 270 to 300 lb. increase of live weight per acre per annum. The Millfield, Medbourne, however, which was stocked with $1\frac{1}{2}$ bullocks and $1\frac{1}{2}$ sheep per acre, produced 490 to 600 lb. increase of live weight. Stoke Meadow with $1\frac{1}{2}$ bullocks and $1\frac{1}{2}$ sheep per acre produced on an average of twenty years 460 lb. increase of live weight. Even the less productive of the fattening pastures were stocked with 1 bullock and 1 sheep per acre and produced 380 to 400 lb. increase of live weight per season. Sir Thomas Middleton's figures are thus seen to be much too low for the fattening pastures.

Between 1945 and 1950 the performance of a hundred-years-old fattening pasture has been compared with that of a newly-sown ley on similar soil. The two pastures produced almost identical live weight increases per acre from 1945 to 1948, but in the drought of 1949 the old pasture stood up to the conditions and drew ahead, so that finally the output of the ley was only 97 per cent of that of the fattening pasture. It seems that it is worth while keeping the few remaining pastures that have not been ploughed up, to prevent the management of fattening pastures over a century old from becoming a lost country craft.

FOR three hundred years Stoke Meadow has gone upon its way, keeping its fertility and still producing luxuriant grass, which fattens bullocks for generations of butchers. It has weathered two great agricultural depressions and two world wars. The enormous imports of chilled meat from the vast grasslands of the Argentine never made it falter, for, though this cheaper meat could compete with the beef from poorer pastures, prime beef was not much affected and still kept its hold on the taste of those customers who were prepared to pay a higher price for really good quality home-killed meat. The war of 1914-1918 hardly left a mark on Stoke Meadow, and it seemed that by its excellence it could defy any period of economic and national emergency.

A slow and insidious change in the taste of the public, however, now threatens to do what more violent crises failed to achieve. A gradual reduction in the size of families has begun to assert itself and the butchers are now asked for lean joints of baby beef of about

3 lb. weight in place of the 7 lb. sirloin of fat beef with its magnificent undercut. The grass of Stoke Meadow is too strong for the young bullocks that supply the baby beef and would need the addition of cake to prevent them from scouring. It will still fatten older and heavier bullocks to perfection without cake, but these now find only a limited market and bring in little profit to the grazier.

The increasing demand for milk threatens to curtail the supply of young stores to fatten in the meadows. To get more milk dairy-farmers are concentrating on cows of dairy type which give the maximum of milk a year. But the nearer the cow is to the best dairy type the poorer are its bull-calves for fattening for beef. So more milk automatically means a shortage of beef stores, and this shortage has driven up the price of stores to a level which leaves only a small profit on them after fattening.

Graziers complain that they are driven to stock their good fattening pastures with dairy-type heifers—sold from the dairy herd because they will not calve or are poor milk-producers—or even with barren cows. It is sad to see this poor material using up splendid grass, and it must be most galling for the grazier to have to put his best pastures to a use so far below their real value. Others, whose pride will not allow them to use their fattening pastures to such poor purpose, are trying to solve the problem by buying stores of a dual-purpose breed from dairy-farms that have them, and it is significant that so many of my friends stock their farms with Lincoln Reds, and that Herefords and Lincoln Red heifers now fatten on Stoke Meadow.

DURING the Second World War Stoke Meadow still remained a pasture as its liability to winter flooding saved it from the plough. In spite of this, however, it probably bears more war scars than any other Midland pasture, for its tenant had hardly begun to congratulate himself on being allowed to keep his good pasture, when half of it fell a victim to a more deadly enemy than the plough.

In 1941 the Air Ministry took over half the meadow and divided off its 40 acres from the rest by a seven-row barbed-wire fence. As this piece was to be used as a practice bombing-target, everything had to be cleared away which could possibly prevent it from being a good mark from far and wide. The trees under whose shade the cattle used to chew

STOKE MEADOW

their cud in the summer were felled, and even the adjoining fences were grubbed. Desolation began long before the first bombs fell.

For the beginner, bomb-aiming was far from an exact science. Wide misses were all too frequent, and these fell in the neighbouring fields, which were full of stock. Three bullocks and twelve sheep were killed; lambs fell down the bomb-holes and died, while many others were injured; and incendiaries set fire to a rick of clover and an elevator standing beside it and burnt both to the ground.

To the unfortunate tenant the four years 1941 to 1945 were a nightmare; from day to day he never knew what new losses he might discover, and the making out of claims for compensation added to the many other forms that had to be filled in by wartime farmers. In these four years he estimates that 20,000 bombs were dropped in and around the target area. He wrote to me at the end of 1946 to say that they had endured a lively time, that the whole business had been a cursed nuisance, and that the claims for compensation had been the most unsatisfactory he had ever had to deal with, for he had not yet received the final settlement. And this I should imagine was a fine example of understatement.

He had got the half meadow back, a poor ghost of its former self. With the land pitted and scarred, matted and weed-ridden after four years of neglect, it was going to take much good work and hard grazing before the indigenous rye-grass and clover would cover the barren patches. Probably the plough would have been the best means of returning it to health, but he already had more arable than he could cope with properly and too little labour to help him, and, besides, the reseedling of 40 acres would be very expensive.

Time has shown that good pastures that

have been ill-treated have a knack of returning to good heart. A generous dressing of manure and lime, and heavy grazing with bullocks and sheep, have now brought Stoke Meadow back to its former excellence. Only the wire fence remains to remind the tenant that it was ever different from the other 40 acres which during the war fattened fifty fine bullocks each season.

THE meadow had other visitors in the war years, visitors who spoil its beauty but improved its health. The river had not been dredged for forty years and was so badly blocked with weeds and reeds that the water could hardly get away at all in times of heavy rain. So the Catchment Board dredged the whole length of the stream and heaped the spoil on the banks. When they had finished, they levelled it with a bulldozer and sowed it with seeds, so that the river is not only deeper, but has also had its grass banks raised, with the result that the drains flow freely again and floods are almost impossible. In his letter the tenant rightly calls this a workmanlike job and a great improvement from a farming point of view.

Yet as I read his letter I am torn between the gain to good farming and the loss of all those sights and scents I held so dear. I cannot help picturing the ugly heavily-pollarded willows, the plain straightened utilitarian stream in which the water flows swiftly, but where there are no longer any pleasant curves, no lovely banks of forget-me-nots and willow-herb, no beds of bulrushes or clumps of reeds where wild duck and moorhen hide and reed-warblers make their nests. And, rightly or wrongly, I feel that I prefer to carry in my memory the picture of Stoke Meadow as it was when I was a boy.

The Poplar-Tree

*The poplar like a fountain shaft
Goes greenly up as though it bare
From out the earth an endless draught
To drench the air.*

*And suddenly amid the hush
The slender column shakes and sings
As though it felt the windy rush
Of seraph wings.*

*Sad spirit, cleave thine earthy tomb,
A fountain in a desert place,
Soar up and feel a seraph's plume
Athwart thy face!*

WILFRID THORLEY.



Property of the Postmaster-General

A. M. KAY

IN bright sunshine on a spring afternoon I set out by the old drove-road that winds up from the seashore, over the Blarbuie hills, across the moors and down to the stepping-stones at the ford of Glenshelister river, bound for a tryst with my lifelong friend Mrs Gillies, the housekeeper at the Castle. The direct route there from the village is along the levels through the riverside woods, but I took the roundabout way to see whether primroses still clustered rife as I remembered them in certain upland nooks; and I had been well compensated for the rough going on that rutted, twisty track by the sight and scent of the yellow beauties gemming the greensward in profusion rich as of old, when, topping the last hill, I came down the brae to rejoin the main road just short of the ford.

There on the copse-sheltered bluff overlooking the stepping-stones was a tinker's encampment, another sign of spring on what used to be a favourite pitch for these gangrels all the year round when I was young. Nowadays I'm told they hibernate in urban winter-quarters and return to the roads only when, like the primroses, they are enticed out by the sunshine and bland airs of another season;

but, whatever changes time may have wrought in their habits, that bivouac on the bluff conformed to ancient usage. Two small smoke-blackened tents faced each other closely on the grass, with a wood-fire glowing between them in a nest of big stones. At the doorway of one tent a wrinkled crone in a tartan plaid tended the fire, puffing placidly at a black cutty-pipe. By the burnside a younger woman was spreading a wiselike washing on the whin-bushes and keeping a watchful eye on three tots of girls playing with chuckie-stones at the water's edge. In the lee of the roadside hedge a battered spring-cart stood uptilted, with a shaggy pony cropping near by. But no men-folk were visible, for, as customary, they would be out foraging, setting rabbit-snares or touting round the cots and farms seeking orders for tinware and tinkering.

Going up the Castle driveway, I met a tinker-wife who had apparently just left the back-door. She was young and sturdy and her deeply-bronzed and densely-freckled features were framed in a towsey mop of copper-tinted hair. Beside her trotted a wee boy, freckled and red-headed like herself, and a bald, beady-eyed baby peeped over her

PROPERTY OF THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL

shoulder from the bight of the plaid on her back. She gave me a friendly grin, and, unlike her forebears as I remember them, didn't whine for 'a copper for the wean, or a crumb o' baccy for ma man.' Instead, she cried: 'Cheerio, mate. Ye'll be O.K. here, or the nice old body inbye is one o' the best, bless her kind hert.' The wee boy seconded that assurance by brandishing an outsize triangular scone, liberally spread with jelly, into which his fine regular teeth had already bitten deeply; and, wondering uneasily whether I really looked unkempt enough to be mistaken by his mother for an elderly tinker, I went up the front doorstep and gave the bell a diffident tinkle.

Mrs Gillies herself opened the door. In one hand she held a great posy of primroses, and she cried: 'Come away in; you're as welcome as these bonnie flowers o' spring that Teenie-the-Tink has just this minute brought me. There she goes down the drive, and, though you don't know her, you would know her grandfather, old Charlie-of-the-Chanter, or "the Chanter," for short. He was the best tinker-piper between here and the Mull o' Kintyre in his day, always carrying a chanter in his pocket and playing and practising on it morning, noon, and night. Many's the time you'll have heard him putting "The Barren Rocks of Aden" or "The Drunken Piper" on the full set too—the oldest bagpipes then to the fore in all Argyll. Just you go on upstairs to my room, and I'll be with you as soon's I've put these primroses in water till I'll find time to sort and set them in the gunroom for the laird to admire when he comes home from the County Council meeting over in Inverlochan.'

Soon we were seated in the sunny window embrasure of the housekeeper's room high in the turret, looking out over the treetops to the sea and exchanging news and gossip. My friend's knitting-needles clicked and flashed as we chatted, and then, with a warning glance, she said: 'Try and keep quiet now for a jiffy till I get past the intakes, and then maybe I'll have a tale for you. I was remembering it when I was putting Teenie's flowers away; and the Chanter himself kept creeping into it, blessings with him, even though he was a ripe rascal and ready for many a mischief when he was here in the flesh in my young days.' And I sat silent until she went on: 'There, that'll do, and you can speak now unless you're too well brought up to do anything to break the thread of my discourse. Anyway, I'll keep on

at my knitting, for busy needles are grand timekeepers for a wagging tongue like mine.' And with this Mrs Gilles began.

I KNOW the tinkers are back again, camped on the bluff yonder where they've been pitching their wee tents for generations. The original Glenshelister family gave them understood rights there and treated them almost as tenants, except that they were let sit rent-free. The old lairds and keepers turned the blind eye if a salmon got grassed, by accident, beside the stepping-stones pool, or if a grouse or a pheasant strayed into the camp-fire pot when the poor, harmless gangrels would have been as well content with a rabbit or an odd farm-yard hen. And when the present laird, Reuben P. Macmaster Muller, came over from the States and bought the Castle property, he adopted, and has followed, these traditions, for, as you know, he reverences the old ways and customs—particularly the kind ones.

'It was for him that Teenie brought the primroses to-day, as she's been doing every springtime for several years back. The wee freckled fellow—you'd notice him behind the scone-and-jelly piece—is her eldest, and he has the princely name of Charles Edward, no less. When he was barely a month old, one backend when winter came early with a snowstorm, the tribe were camped on the bluff, and there he went and caught some trouble that beat even his great-grannie—the old body you saw smoking her pipe at the fireside as you came along—to handle. They were all at their wits' end to know what to do for the sick bairn, when who should come up the road in the car but Reuben P.; and, noticing an unusual stir in the camp, he stopped and went over to see what was amiss. Like some others I could name, he whiles goes about dressed more like a tinker than a decent gentleman, and at first the tribe took him for a passing tramp; but they soon found him an angel in disguise, sent by Providence to help poor wee Charles Edward.

'Our laird has a cool, clear head and plenty of commonsense in any kind of bother, and he gripped the nettle that night properly. Without ado he bundled the bairn and his mother into the car and hurled them off to Inverlochan Cottage Hospital, where the wee tinker had skilled care and attention fit for any prince; and, in a matter of days, he was fit again for meat or mischief and away into winter-quarters with the rest of the clan. The doctors told his

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

mother at the time that if the treatment had been delayed her boy would surely have died there at the burnside, although I daresay the hardiness he heired from his forebears like the Chanter helped him to win through. Anyhow, that's the way Teenie has been coming to the Castle as she did to-day with her primroses betokening her thanks, sometimes when neither the laird nor his lady wife has been here to accept the offering. Then I've had to post the flowers on to them in the south, a job I've enjoyed doing fine; for gratitude's real warming to the heart, as I know from the glow at mine when I've been making up these primrose parcels.

'Of course, it was me that gave the wee tinker the scone-and-jelly you saw him at, and envied, on your way in this afternoon. You surely wouldn't expect me to let any bairn go from the door without something in his hand—me that was brought up to be kind to every traveller, tramp, or tinker that came to Blarbuie farmhouse when I was a girl. Oh, I knew you hadn't forgotten the pieces-and-jelly you've had yourself in your day from my mother, blessings with her, at that same door, but it's real nice to hear you say you remember. However, there you go, interrupting me with your blethers about Highland hospitality, and kind hearts and coronets, when I'm trying to tell you about a bit of Highland roguery, with his lordship the Chanter and his tribe as the horrid examples. So just you save your breath to cool your porridge while I talk on, and knit, for if my tongue's busy that's no excuse for idle fingers.

'**AFTER** the last of the original Glenshelister lairds had passed away there came some years when the Castle and property were let to strangers who weren't used to our tinkers and were less easy on them than our native gentry had been. One of these was a Mr Masterman, a rich manufacturer from somewhere down Birmingham way. Some of the local folk said among themselves he was well named, for he was a masterful man and real keen on his dues. And who could blame him for that or for wanting to see that he got all the game and salmon he was paying for, or for objecting to the likes of the Chanter helping themselves to whatever they could lay hook, crook, net, or snare on? But, like plenty others hereabouts then, and some now, the tinkers saw little wrong in taking fish or

fowl, whoever claimed to own them, and that brought them and the Castle tenant to the clash.

'Mr Masterman called such taking plain stealing, or poaching, and set himself and Duncan Macintyre the keeper to catching somebody, our notorious friend the Chanter for one, in the act. That one had all the guile there's in it, and lots of experience of poaching, seeing he'd been art and part in that kind of ploy ever since he could toddle from the tent to the burnside. So they had a job on their hands, I'm telling you! Not even Duncan could get any help from the local natives in the way of information. Indeed, he didn't expect any, for I daresay he'd now and again been out for a turn with the torch, the spear, and the splash-net himself before he reformed and took to the keeping. However, he noticed that Danny Hughes, the fishmonger in Inverlochan, often had a fine salmon on his slab and heard that Danny and the Chanter had been seen colloquing over a dram in the Iona Arms, as thick as thieves, on one or two nights when there was a fine poacher's moon; so the keeper put two and two together and began to keep an eye on the tinkers' camp down yonder on the bluff.

'Nobody would expect to see a fly member like the Chanter openly carrying or handing over a salmon taken from the pool above the stepping-stones to Danny, and when Duncan discussed that with Mr Masterman he suggested the postman who took the daily mailbag from Glenshelister to Inverlochan as a likely carrier. That was Dugie McQueen, one you'll remember as a very upright man, a ruling elder of the Free Kirk, who would as soon think of breaking the Ten Commandments in a row as of stretching a single official rule. But it was his duty to take parcels from folk at the roadside as he went his rounds, so what was to hinder the Chanter from posting a salmon well packed in rushes and plenty of paper by handing it to Dugie as he went by?

'**WELL**, one morning when Dugie was coming down the drove-road, after calling at Blarbuie and the other hill-farms, he saw Masterman and Duncan crouched behind a rock on the braeface peering through field-glasses at the tinkers' camp. Without glasses, Dugie could see the Chanter himself sitting at the camp-fire playing on the chanter that he got his byname from, as innocent as a baby

PROPERTY OF THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL

at its bottle, but scarcely as quiet. The keeper gave Dugie a nod and set a finger to his lips as the postie went by, wondering what the pair of them were glowering at, but minding his own and the Government's business. Then, as he came abreast of the encampment, he saw some other watchers—for, a wee bit beyond the bluff, a lump of a tinker lad was lying behind a bush with an old brass telescope at his eye watching the watchers on the brae, and a string of bairns were passing back word of what he was seeing to his lordship, the old rascal at the fire!

'At a gap in the roadside hedge two wee tinker lassies were waiting to hand Dugie a parcel—a long, soft, heavy one, done up in brown-paper, with reeds and rushes peeping out at its ends. It was addressed to Danny Hughes, and maybe Dugie smelt a rat, but he stopped, fished out the spring-balance, weighed the parcel and took it and the postage-money from the lassies. He was stowing the parcel into his bag when down the brae came running Mr Masterman and the keeper crying on him to wait a wee; and before they could make up on Dugie who should come round the corner of the road on his bicycle but Big-Hugh-the-polisman from Inverlochan, who seldom bothered Glenshelister unless he was sent for, or unless he had a sheep-dipping or a roup to attend.

'They were all gathered at the roadside having words about the parcel when the Chanter strolled up and joined the sederunt. Mr Masterman was claiming that a salmon of his was in Dugie's bag and openly accusing the tinkers of poaching it. He demanded that Dugie would hand over his property and that Big Hugh would take the Chanter in charge on the spot. But Dugie said that, by Act of Parliament, the parcel was the property of the Postmaster-General whatever was in it, and that both himself and Masterman would get the jail if it left Post-Office hands till it was delivered to the person it was addressed to. Whether Big Hugh knew the law of the matter or not—and I doubt if he did—he backed the postman up, and the Chanter stood by, looking sad and sorrowful and as innocent and injured as he could manage.

'In the end, Duncan-the-keeper suggested that they should all go with Dugie to Inverlochan, let him deliver the parcel to Danny Hughes, and have Big Hugh demand to see what was in it. If that gave evidence against the Chanter, he could be lifted nice and near

the lock-up—him and any of his tribe that might be concerned in the poaching.

'With that, up came Thin Peter, the Castle groom, driving the dogcart, and Masterman and the keeper climbed in all ready for the jaunt. They wanted to give Dugie a lift, but he would have none of that, because he was timed to walk, and he would break a rule if he reached the post-office early, or late. Big Hugh had the bicycle, and the Chanter and his clan could walk, and were already falling in for the march, men, women, and bairns. Among them was Teenie's mother, with Teenie herself, then a baby a few weeks old, on her back in the bight of her plaid; and Mr Masterman, who was a well-doing, kindly man in spite of his masterful ways, insisted on giving mother and child a seat with him and Duncan in the dogcart.

'One of the tinker lads ran back to the tent for the Chanter's pipes—he had his famous chanter in his coat-pocket, of course—and away they marched ahead of the dogcart, with him piping "The March to the Battlefield" in his best style.

THE procession came into Inverlochan when the streets were full of farmer-bodies and their wives in for the market, and a good crowd gathered when they reached Danny's fish-shop. There the Chanter handed his pipes to his daughter-in-law, saying in a voice loud enough for all to hear: "Here you are, Flora dear. Let you and Donald take good care of them, for I'll no' likely be needin' them for the next sixty days if the gentlemen here get their will o' me. Ach, you'll maybe better have the chanter too in case Big Hugh will be taking a blow at it and getting his ginger whiskers that he's so rightly prood o' fankled up in the finger-holes."

'By then Danny Hughes was at his shop-door, all smiles and joviality. "Man," says he, "it's a terrible pity none o' ye sent me word o' the visit, and the pipin' an' all, or I would surely have the flag up to welcome you. But no, I forgot. I haven't the halliards for it, and how could I be nailing my good flag to the pole on the roof there even for a great occasion like this! Come away in Dugie, honest man, for I see you have a parcel for me, maybe the very one I'm waiting for."

'In went Dugie, with as many as could press forward after him, and Danny made a great palaver of slowly undoing the string and

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

opening the parcel—and there inside it was only a long hank of thin rope, with metal rings neatly spliced into its ends! "Here we are," cries Danny. "It's my halliards right enough, and me and the mistress are greatly obliged to Mister Johnstone, the Chanter himself there, for splicing on the rings so nice and neatly for us. Ach, we'll have the flag up to-day yet; but maybe some of you will clear yourselves away and let me sell a bit fish to my customers, although not as much as the scale of one salmon have I in the shop, or have had this many's the day."

'What could Mr Masterman and the keeper do but go away back home in the dogcart with Thin Peter? But yes, they had a thing or two to do before they left Inverlochan. There was the Chanter, standing drooped on the pavement and declaring he would never think of asking the decent gentleman for apologies or compensations, until Mr Masterman handed him one or two paper pounds saying he and Duncan Macintyre were sorry for their mistake. Then there was Dugie, the postman, seeking somebody to go with him to the post-office and explain to the postmaster why the Glenshelister post was whole ten minutes late coming back—a thing that had never happened before, not since the snowdrifts in the great storm in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year, and that was long before Dugie's time too! The whole affair didn't bother Big Hugh, not one bit. He was never happy when he had to take folk in charge, anyway, and he and the sergeant were busy clearing the crowd away from Danny's shop-door and discouraging the farmer-lads from chairing the Chanter round the square. Isn't it terrible the way a real rascal gets popularity from people that ought to have more sense and proper reverence for the law of the land!

'I daresay most of Masterman's compensation money went into the Iona Arms that day, and I'll warrant little of it travelled back to the tinkers' camp—except maybe in a bottle. However, the procession marched out of Inverlochan at last, with the Chanter leading, playing "Scotland the Brave" on his old pipes; and the ho-ro-yally round the camp-fire lasted until daylight, keeping Duncan-the-keeper off his sleep in his cottage beyond the stepping-stones, and he hoping for the first full night's rest in weeks, seeing that, for once, the tinkers would be in no condition to try lifting a salmon from the pool or a grouse from the moor!

'Mind you, it was gey odd that Danny Hughes had a fine big salmon laid out on the slab as soon as the tinkers were away to the Iona Arms—odd until you know where the fish came from and how it got there. Well, when yon watching was going on above and in the camp, Mr Masterman and Duncan knew where the Chanter was, and he knew where they were; but at the same time Teenie's mother and her man, and one or two others, were up beyond the bridge cannily taking a salmon from the pool there. They had no bother at all about getting it safely in to Danny Hughes, for it travelled in the dogcart with Mr Masterman himself, in beside wee Teenie in the bight of her mother's plaid! Och, they had the child well happed so's she wouldn't get damp and scales off the fish; and she got no dunts either from the half-mutchkin bottle Danny gave to her mother to carry back in the same place!

'WELL, well, human beings, tinkers and all, are queer creatures and greatly mixed in their natures. There's Teenie, brought up as she was and with the Chanter for a bad example, coming here with primroses and gratitude for past kindness like any sentimental schoolgirl! And, though the Chanter's descendants of her tribe will maybe, now and then, help themselves to a trout or two as their forefathers did, they'll keep watch by night to prevent any of these present-day scoundrels from the cities coming to try their blasting and netting tricks on Glenshelister river. Reuben P. knows that fine, too, and he says he's never had better dividends from any investment than he's had, in primroses and protection, for that one small act of kindness to a sick tinker bairn.

'Now, I've never known you keep so quiet for so long, and you deserve your tea for your endurance of my blethers. We're to have salmon to it, fish honestly come by and that hasn't travelled in any tinker-wife's plaid-neuk. And I had it in mind to offer you a cut to carry away with you, but maybe I'll better not, not to-day when, between you and me, in that old suit and heavy boots, you might easily be mistaken in the gloaming for a poaching tinker and get yourself lifted by Big-Hugh-the-polisman's successor, who's over from Inverlochan this afternoon for a sheep-dipping at Blarbuie. However, you'll be back here before you leave Glenshelister and I'll see you get a bit

salmon then. I'll let you watch me pack it up too so's you can be sure it's not rope that's in the parcel; and then you can post it home to your wife—my love to her—in case it might leak and spoil the good suit I know you have but seldom wear except when you're coming

to and going away from Glenshelister. Besides, it'll be nice and safe in the post, where, as Dugie McQueen would tell you if he were still in the flesh, it will be, under Act of Parliament, the property of the Postmaster-General.'

Dustbins Redundant

Life in an African Hut

A. E. HAARER

WITHIN a few more decades the primitive African will have lost much that we should admire him for to-day, and he will have gained a great deal from our own point of view when he follows our civilised way of life.

In the remoter villages the average African lives in a round grass-thatched hut with one door but no windows. Sometimes there is a low mud-plastered wall, but as often as not the hut is of the beehive type with thatch reaching to the ground, laid on a framework of branches and saplings, with a foundation of neatly-tied cane. The door is usually of a kind of wickerwork and securely fastened at night. What, then, is there to admire in all this?

To begin with, such huts are surprisingly roomy, for certainly they do not look large from the outside. Moreover, they are very cosy. In countries where night and day temperatures are extreme, or where from a sticky thunderous heat the temperature may suddenly drop during a hailstorm to a shiver-creating cold, a thatched roof evens things out. It is pleasantly cool inside during the heat of the day, and comparatively warm at night. There is a soothing shade for eyes that have been screwed up in the sun's glare, and no windows needing curtains to filter the power of the light, or to face the violence of a high wind and thus cause draughts.

Such a house has been evolved and tested throughout the centuries to suit man's health and temperament—primitive man, of course,

a man who walks about without much clothing and likes a warm cosy atmosphere when he sits still indoors. The children never wear anything until they reach puberty, and then it may be just a scrap of goatskin or a bunch of leaves. Even when the one door is opened in the morning after the hut has been shut all night, and filled with animals and sleeping humans, there is hardly a worse atmosphere than that of a filled railway-compartment in England after a night's journey in wintertime.

The thatch, of course, is waterproof, but not airproof. The hot air rises and seeps through the thatch, while the colder air creeps through the wicker door, keeping up a circulation without draughts, and without altering the temperature to compare with the extremes outside. When Africans become civilised and live in rectangular houses with windows and concrete floors their health will not necessarily be the better for it. They will benefit in other ways from civilising influences that may suggest that their 'improved' housing has been partly responsible for their stronger physique.

IN place of carpets or rugs that collect dust and germs and become moth-eaten in course of time, the hard-beaten earth floor is generally covered with fine grass that is freshly gathered and laid whenever the last lot has become soiled. The floor is swept at these times by a good housewife and moistened to

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

prevent chigoe-fleas or flies from breeding. The only other floor-covering may be a woven mat of palm-leaf or rushes, and it is considered disgraceful if these are ever dirty. All the old grass is spread on the food plantations as a mulch, or is eaten by the ever-present goat.

The hearth is in the centre of the floor, where the embers just smoulder while there is no one in attendance, or the flames lick the rounded earthenware cooking-pots while a meal is being cooked. There are no cinders to tip into a dustbin, and no necessity for such an evil-smelling receptacle; hence flies are at a minimum. The wood ashes are spread to fertilise the crops.

Smoke from the fire keeps away vermin, and mosquitoes to a large extent. Since it readily seeps through the thatch, and because nothing but dry timber is used, there is no blinding smoke within the hut. In time the rafters become pickled like a smoked ham and have a pervading odour, almost of an antiseptic nature, that is not at all unpleasant, as many of the firesticks are aromatic.

There is no furniture beyond a few carved wooden stools, some homemade bedsteads with netted fibre-rope or leather thongs in place of spring-mattresses, and perhaps an overmattress padded with dried grass. The bed coverings may be blankets nowadays or skins, and these are washed or aired in strong sunshine when they become too fusty. One would as soon sleep in these as in some of the worst slum dwellings in our home country.

Earthenware cooking-pots, a large water-storage pot, some drinking gourds, water-carrying gourds and dippers, wooden spoons, locally-made kitchen-knives, and a few wooden or earthenware bowls are strewn near the hearth or at one side of the entrance-door. A wooden box or a fancy homemade basket, in which to keep odd trinkets, and the man's hunting-gear or weapons of defence are the only other items which require storage-room. A woman may have a stiff-pronged comb of wood with which to tease out her crinkly hair, and the man a sharp piece of metal to act as a razor. There may be an axe shaped like a tomahawk, some string-bags, and various baskets for garnering firewood and crops.

Sometimes a calf and a few goats are kept penned in a reserved corner for the night, with a few chickens that roost on perches above their heads; nothing that one might call abominable or filthy, since the corner is cleaned out each day, though such an ad-

mixture of human beings and animals under the same roof may affect our sensitivities. It was not, however, so very long ago that we lived in much the same manner, and the Irish peasant still shares his hovel with his pigs!

The door is never locked, in fact it is left open all day, albeit the occupants may be away hunting, herding cattle, or cultivating food crops at a distance down the valley. There are still no thieves in the remote villages of primitive African races.

THERE may be polygamy, and, in accordance with custom, this may be forced upon a man, because if his brother dies then his brother's wives must be taken into his household. Surplus women are thus maintained and protected in wild country where there are many hazards, and, because polygamy creates many brothers and large families, a man must expect and be willing to accept an extra burden of this kind in spite of his slender resources, though the more women there are in his house the more food they are able to grow if the weather is propitious.

In every other way morality is of a high standard among primitive people, though it may suffer lapses among the sophisticated townee Africans and among those who have been in contact with Europeans. Venereal diseases may now be rife, but they were not indigenous, and were introduced from abroad. Polygamy has assisted their spread until they have entered family life and are considered a misfortune rather than a shame. Medical statistics show that 80 per cent of some tribes suffer from these diseases in varying forms.

There is no privacy in an African's hut. All that separates a man's bed from those of his children and his visiting relations is a hanging curtain of matting, of skins, or of coarse cloth. Every word, every movement and human act is heard and understood by everyone within, by children who grow up simple-minded and innocent because everything is considered natural and not a thing indecent, except a thief, or a man who seduces another man's wife. Is there anything to deplore in this? Evil-mindedness is reserved for civilised races, along with dustbins and the garbage they contain.

THE compound surrounding an African's hut in the more remote villages is always

DUSTBINS REDUNDANT

swept clean. It may be a patch of hard sun-baked soil surrounded by a stockade of cane, or just set among banana-groves or his cultivated fields. A second hut may have been built beside the first to take the overflow of his family, and in a corner are the grain-bins of dried mud, built on stilts and covered with thatched roofs, looking not unlike miniature huts. Sheltered beneath the eaves will be a large wooden mortar for grinding corn and a wooden pole for a pestle.

A faggot of firewood just brought in and a pawpaw tree, or a wild-fig, which throws a pool of shade on the ground, may be the only other things noticeable within the compound, except, perhaps, a hanging bunch of maize-cobs in the tree, and the entrance to a zareba of thorn within which the cattle are placed in safety for the night. Hunt as you may, you will find no dustbin, no garbage that has rested overnight. There are no bits of paper fluttering about, no empty bottles or rusting tin-cans, no broken-down sheds and dumps of old iron, none of the horrors that one sees in back-'gardens' from a railway-carriage in England.

Peelings, green pods, and any vegetable matter that is waste is fed to the goats. Weevily grain, unwanted porridge, or any food of this kind is thrown to the narrow-chested chickens, which eschew the neighbourhood of the hut because there is seldom anything there to eat. So hungry are they that they prefer to forage in the fields for seeds and grubs in the company of wild spur-fowl. There are also the sandy-coloured hunting-dogs, with pointed noses, pricked-up ears, and ridiculous tails. They wait ravenous for any offal. No sooner are yams peeled, beans shucked, or game prepared for the pot than the waste matter is eaten by goats, poultry, or dogs. If a big bone is thrown aside one evening, a hyæna will snaffle it for certain that same night, and the shells and husks of grain are useful for a mulch. There is no need for a garbage-bin anywhere.

AT 6.30 p.m. darkness descends in equatorial regions, and there is no light except that from the moon, and the stars, and the fire on the central hearth. Oil-lamps of the hurricane-lantern kind have come of late from far-off bazaars, but, since oil is expensive and hard to come by, the lamps are seldom used by primitive people, except for carrying

on night journeys. Everyone goes to bed early in the evening and everyone wakes and starts the next day at dawn. In spite of the darkness within the hut, and the fuggy atmosphere, and the absence of alarm-clocks, there are no sluggards among the fit. Of those races who pride themselves on what they think is cleanliness, the men take a dipper filled with cold water from the water-pot and sluice this over their bodies.

As the sun edges from behind the horizon sending long shadows across the land, the women move off in chattering groups to cut and carry firewood, and to carry water from the distant waterhole, a muddy pond wherein, when they have drawn their water from the cleanest-looking patch, they stand and bathe themselves.

Babes are carried on their mothers' backs. Toddlers accompany their mothers while they weed the fields, so filled with food that their tummies are distended on account of indigestion. Girls must learn at an early age all the tasks so burdensome to womenfolk, while young boys herd the cattle and practise with their bows and arrows. Men hunt, build huts, break new soil, repair fences, and chip at new spear-shafts; or they take their ease on holiday between the spells when they must travel far away to earn money to pay taxes or for tribute to their chief.

Their drinking-water is unclean, they have no soap with which to scour off their greasy body-sweat, and they have habits which leave much to be desired. Their diet is monotonous and often ill-balanced; they have sores and sicknesses, with charlatan witch-doctors and superstitions, but no real doctor within call, nor a chemist's shop in the next street. Clean water, a balanced diet, and proper medical treatment are what they chiefly lack. We turn up our noses when we see them eat grasshoppers, white grubs, raw entrails, and such disgusting things; but we eat shellfish, raw sardines, Bombay-duck, and many things that an African would despise.

Not all of us use enough soap! We swear and cheat and squabble and are irreligious in a way that would make a primitive African sun-worshipper shake his head. Our countryside is festering with ash-heaps and garbage-tips, with beastly hoardings, and weedy unwanted corners filled with rust and decay. We hear a clatter next door and we know that Mrs Jones has just thrown into the dustbin something she hopes she will never see again.

Twice-Told Tales

XXIX.—*Celestial Love*

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of May 1853]

IN the Celestial Empire, love-matters are managed by a confidant, or go-between, and the billets-doux written to one another by the papas. At Amoy, a marriage was recently concluded between the houses of Tan and O; on which occasion the following epistles passed between the two old gentlemen:—

From Papa Tan:—‘The ashamed younger brother, surnamed Tan, named Su, with washed head makes obeisance, and writes this letter to the greatly virtuous and honourable gentleman whose surname is O, old teacher, great man. At this season of the year the satin curtains are enveloped in mist, reflecting the beauty of the river and hills, in the fields of the blue gem are planted rows of willows close together, arranging and diffusing the commencement of genial influences, and consequently adding to the good of the old year.

‘I duly reverence your lofty door. You, my honourable nearly-related uncle, your good qualities are of a very rare order. I, the mean one, am ashamed of myself, just as rotten wood is in the presence of aromatic herbs. I now receive your indulgence inasmuch as you have listened to the words of the match-maker, and given Miss S. in marriage to the mean one’s eldest son, named Kang: your assenting to it is worth more to me than a thousand pieces of gold. The marriage business will be conducted according to the six rules of propriety, and I will reverently announce the business to my ancestors with presents of gems and silks. I will arrange the things received in your basket, so that all who tread the threshold of my door may enjoy them. From this time forward the two surnames will be united, and I trust the union will be a felicitous one, and last for a hundred years. I hope that your honourable benevolence and consideration will defend me unceasingly. At present the dragon flies in Sin Hai term, the first

month, lucky day. I, Mr Su, bow respectfully. Light before.’

From Papa O:—‘The younger brother, surnamed O, named Tus, of the family to be related by marriage, washes his head clean, knocks his head and bows, and writes this marriage-letter in reply to the far-famed and virtuous gentleman surnamed Tan, the venerable teacher and great man who manages this business. At this season the heart of the plum-blossom is increasingly white; at the beginning of the first month it opens its petals. The eyebrows of the willow shoot out their green, when shaken by the wind it displays its glory, and grows luxuriantly into five generations. ‘Tis matter for congratulation the union of a hundred years. I reverence your lofty gate. The prognostic is good, also the divination of the lucky bird. The stars are bright, and the dragons meet together. I, the foolish one, am ashamed of my diminutiveness. I for a long time have desired your dragon powers, now you have not looked down upon me with contempt, but have entertained the statements of the matchmaker, and agree to give Mr Kang to be united to my despicable daughter. We all wish the girl to have her hair dressed, and the young man to put on his cap of manhood. The peach-flowers just now look beautiful, the red plum also looks gay. I praise your son, who is like a fairy horse who can cross over through water, and is able to ride upon the wind and waves; but my tiny daughter is like a green willow and a feeble plant, and is not worthy of becoming the subject of verse.

‘Now I reverently bow to your good words, and make use of them to display your good-breeding. Now I hope your honourable benevolence will always remember me without end. Now the dragon flies in the Sin Hai term, first month, lucky day. Mr Tu makes obeisance. May the future be prosperous!’



The Woodcutter's Son

MATHEW HAYNES

'TA-RAN-TA-RA, come, show a leg,' said the little tin trumpet, and the woodcutter's son, who had slept all through the reveille, woke up and ran down to his breakfast, which was porridge *à la maison*. The trouble about it was that until she had met the woodcutter his mother had been a bugler in the A.T.S. and was not very good at cooking, so the porridge was lumpy, or at housekeeping, so there wasn't very much of it, though she was fairly sound otherwise.

When he had almost finished his plate, his mother, who had risen to the rank of Lance-Sergeant, fell him in, inspected him ('Unshaven—extra fatigues'), and ordered him out to his woodcutting. He sloped his axe, turned rightabout, and marched off.

As soon as he was out of sight of the house, he brought it down to the trail, for it was a big and heavy axe, and bumped uncomfortably on his shoulder. It used to belong to his father, until one day he had misjudged a swing at shoulder-height, and became a late woodcutter. Then his son had to take on his work, which didn't suit him at all, for he didn't like it.

He was quite well-read, for a late woodcutter's son, and knew all about woodcutter's sons and enchanted and enchanting princesses

and witches and how everything always turned out all right in the end. His chief worry was that there never seemed to be a beginning, but only a continuation, and a continuation of woodcutting at that, which he found rather tiring, very boring, and painful for the palms of his hands, which were apt to blister. As he trudged through the uncut wood, acres and hundreds of acres of it, he remarked to himself how browned off he was, an expression he had picked up from his mother, and which seemed to suit his mood.

'A NICE day,' said the dog trotting beside him, 'but there's a bit of rain about.'

The woodcutter's son said 'Argh,' which was his normal morning response to a remark like this, and then nearly dropped his axe when he realised who was speaking.

'You want to be careful with things like that,' said the dog. 'It isn't sharp, but you'd get a nasty bang if it fell on your foot.'

'True enough,' said the woodcutter's son, recovering his axe and his poise. 'I've tried to sharpen it ever since I've had this job, but I don't seem able to manage it, somehow.'

'Tried a file,' asked the dog, 'or carborundum, or a grindstone?'

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

'Yes, and a leather strop and a patent sharpener and emery-paper, and pretty well everything I could think of.'

'Well, I don't know,' said the dog. 'Have a swing at this sapling, and maybe I'll be able to think of something.'

The woodcutter's son took a swing at the sapling and bruised the bark considerably. Then he drew back and had another, which did the same, only in a different place. Then a couple more, rather closer together, but equally ineffective.

'That's not so hot,' remarked the dog, 'and I think I could bite through it quicker, except that I want my teeth for other things.'

So the two of them sat down and thought for a while, to no purpose at all, for the dog was thinking of raw mutton-chops, while the woodcutter's son was wondering whether the time had come for him to kiss the dog, who then, by all the rules, should turn into a charming princess. He didn't do anything about it, for the dog was a dog, and not a bitch, which seemed to complicate it for him. But it was almost worth taking a risk, just to be shot of woodcutting.

After a while they both sighed and shook their heads, the dog scratched his left armpit, and they both walked on.

'Could it be that you are using the blunt side of the axe, and not the blade?' suggested the dog, to which the woodcutter's son didn't even reply.

WHEN they were a mile or so deeper in the woods they came on an old woman dressed in black, with a steeple-hat and about four inches of visible red petticoat, who was gathering sticks. She looked very old and very wise and very toothless—in fact, eminently a person to answer difficult questions. The dog, who was by now in the lead, started explaining about the bluntness of the instrument and the impossibility of cutting wood with it, not to mention that abhorrence of his vocation which afflicted the woodcutter's son. He was using rather long words to justify himself, and was not greatly helped by the woodcutter's son, who had relapsed into a monosyllabic quasi-silence.

The old woman heard them out, and when they had both finished and were feeling rather dry, produced a battered ear-trumpet and a bottle of stout. Pouring the one into the other, she passed it round, which made them

all feel much better. Then she took a cork out of the narrow end, put it in her left ear, applied the trumpet to her right, and said: 'Would you start again, for I think I missed some of it.'

And away they went, and this time the dog had even longer words, though he was handicapped by his hiccups, for he wasn't used to stout. About halfway through the recital the old woman said: 'And you, my lad, had better pick up sticks, for you aren't adding anything to the conversation.'

BY the time the dog had finished, it was getting dark. The old woman thought a little, popped a part-worn bit of chewing-gum into her mouth and mumbled it, then thought again. 'If you'll come along to my house,' she said, 'I'll give you something that'll save you all this woodcutting.'

So they made their way to her hovel, which would have been condemned by any sanitary inspector, and she went inside. The woodcutter's son, who had carried an enormous bundle of sticks for her, stood outside expectant. The least he could get would be a new and shiny axe, which would do all the chopping for him, but what would be really nice would be a little quiet arborifissious or dendroschizous magic. (He had caught the long words from the dog.)

When the old woman came out into the dark, she gave him a small piece of paper, about the size of a newspaper-cutting and said: 'This is the answer to your troubles. Use it intelligently, and you need never cut wood again.'

Then the woodcutter's son realised that everything was all right, and that he would never have to carry or use that heavy axe again, so away he skipped home to his mother, leaving the axe behind, falling over brambles and slipping into ditches and skidding on the muddy patches and not caring a jot, anyway. But all the time he was hugging his inside right-hand breast-pocket, where he had his slip of paper very carefully stowed, as should be done with all the best magics.

When he got home, he didn't mind a bit when his mother fell him in and marched him in front of herself on several charges:

- (i) failing to appear on the supper parade;
- (ii) losing by neglect one axe, woodcutting, the property of his late father;
- (iii) failing to bring home any wood; and

MECHANICAL ACCOUNTING AS A CAREER FOR GIRLS

(iv) conduct to the prejudice, in that he, whilst on the above-mentioned charges, merely laughed and waved a bit of paper.

After she had called and heard her own evidence, she asked: 'Anything to say?' but before she got as far as 'Seven days C.B.', which usually followed it immediately, the boy burst out and told her all about the dog and the witch and the wonderful bit of paper, which was going to make them both rich and

happy for always, without having to cut any more wood.

She took the paper from him and read:

'Williams and Thom. Wood merchants.

Split logs delivered. £5 a ton.

Phone: Witchwood 999.'

Which only goes to show that it isn't much good hoping for magic to do it all, if you aren't prepared to work yourself.

Mechanical Accounting as a Career for Girls

OLIVIA GREENWOOD

IT is all bound up with figure-work, but you do not need to be particularly clever at mathematics to make good in this particular field of office-work. To the girl who has a leaning to a business life, and yet wants something more interesting than adding up columns of figures or flicking over the pages of a ready-reckoner, here is a fascinating job, well paid, and with scope.

WHAT is meant by the term 'mechanical accounting'? Just this. In most large business organisations to-day all the calculating work—that is, adding, billing, book-keeping, invoicing, extending wages, and payroll calculations, is done by electrical or hand-driven machines, and these machines need trained operators. Just as the introduction of typewriters meant a step forward in office management, so has mechanisation revolutionised the figure-work and created new opportunities.

The most widely used of office machines are the adding and calculating group. These machines, with a trained operator, speedily cope with all routine calculations. There are

various types of machines all used extensively in British business houses. To name a few, there are the Sumlock, Comptometer, Burroughs, Olivetti, Frieden, and Marchant, all with their individual merits and slightly different methods of operation.

There are various ways of becoming a trained operator, and it is even possible to earn while learning. Most sizable offices and banks use calculators and often train their staff in the use of them. Other organisations run evening classes for training. If efficiency is required more speedily, the selling organisations of the calculators run schools, where a full course can be taken, at the end of which an examination is held and a diploma of merit awarded. The fees for such a course are moderate, round about 12 guineas for a three to six months' course, and a job is found at the end of it. Indeed, there is a keen demand for operators and training schools have waiting-lists of firms requiring trained operators. The Comptometer organisation has schools in most large towns in Britain and many overseas.

As for pay, before the War a calculating-machine operator could always demand and get 5s. weekly above the rate for an ordinary

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

clerk. To-day, in an age of mechanisation, a conscientious experienced girl can earn a good salary. A trained junior starts at round about £3, 10s. weekly, with the chance of advancement up to say £500 yearly for a supervisor of a battery of calculators.

BOOK-KEEPING was always a tedious office routine. The time has passed, however, when a book-keeper sat on a high stool, pen poised, ledgers stacked in front of him, laboriously posting each item, hoping—it was by no means certain—that he would be able to strike a balance. Now there are machines to do this work. The various items, debit and credit, are posted by the operator to the machine, which gives a neat printed record on the various folios. The machine adds or subtracts the items and there is no doubt about the accuracy of the outcome.

Training, here again, can often be got in a business, or the selling organisation of the book-keeping machine will train a bright clerk as part of the selling service. The Burroughs Machine Co., one of the biggest suppliers of this type of machine, have various training schools. Salaries are good, a trained operator getting between £4 to £8 weekly, according to age and experience.

A more complicated form of mechanical accounting is one known as the punched-card system. This is more elaborate in its application and is used only by bigger firms who would have the volume of work to warrant its installation. There are various types of

machines—key-punchers, verifiers, sorting and tabulating machines, which all go to make up the system, one type of which is known as the 'Hollerith.' The machines are the property of the British Tabulating Machine Co., who hire them out and assist in training girls to operate the various machines.

WHAT are the prospects of getting on? Again, as in any other job, it is entirely up to the individual. One of the plums of the profession is that of supervisor in charge of an installation. The supervisor is responsible for producing figure data from her staff on time—and that is most important—so that it is of real use to executives and heads of departments in controlling costs and determining policy. As every good accountant knows, figures to be of use must be presented speedily and accurately, and not when they have become ancient history.

Another possibility for a girl with good organising ability is that of running a calculating bureau. Firms who have not enough figure-work to justify the purchase of calculators of their own, or who have peak periods of work and require help, send out their work to such a bureau and a charge is made for this service.

Mechanical accounting offers a worth-while career to an intelligent figure-minded girl. Besides doing a stimulating job, she will have the satisfaction of knowing that she is playing no small part in helping to run efficiently the nation's industry.

My Belovèd

*Here would I sing a song to light thy sorrow,
A song of sunshine when the shadows fall,
To herald forth with joy a fair to-morrow,
A morn with love clear-shining over all.*

*High overhead the larks to heaven are singing,
They seek the cloudland when the sun breaks through;
So shall my heart to thy dear heart keep winging,
So shall my soul to thine be ever true.*

*Oh, my belovèd, see the dawn is breaking,
And, lo, from out that tender heart of thine
The love-lit beauty of thy soul is waking
The glow of love within this soul of mine.*

GILBERT RAE.



Yellow Tooth, the Trespasser

H. MORTIMER BATTEN

IT was sundown, and the wood was already hidden in deepest shadow. Peering into it from without, it looked like a tropical jungle, so huge were the fans of the wild hemlock, so rich the trailers of honeysuckle hanging from bough to boulder. A wealth of scents filled the air—the scent of foxglove, standing sentinel-like in the gloom, of vast beds of forget-me-not, of wild garlic, and the damp sweet scent of decaying leaves among the ferns.

Here it was night, but amid the jet-black shadows the brook at the foot of the wood flashed crimson and gold, its surface so brilliantly burnished that the protruding rocks looked like blocks of ebony. A vast peace reigned everywhere, and the angler who sat smoking away up on the gravel bank, waiting for the night flies to appear upon the water, was himself no more than a shadowy form in this world of shadows.

Upstream something showed in silhouette against the water, then came on in rapid bounds, at times invisible, at times only its reflection in the water indicating the course it took. At the point where a tiny stream came down from the wood and joined the river the thing paused, sat motionless for perhaps ten seconds, then plunged in and swam across to the forest side. A little gold and crimson

wedge marked the course of its going across the pool, and, gaining the opposite bank, it sat bolt upright, its back to a boulder, alert and motionless.

What was it? A rabbit? No. A rabbit would not have kept to the water's edge, bounding from stone to stone, as this had done. A squirrel? No. Too slow. A rat? What else could it be but a huge house-rat, inflicting its unwelcome presence on this quiet place for the summer months as rats had a habit of doing?

But wait, what was that? Another creature was following down the stream, following in the footsteps of the first—a creature that bounded from stone to stone, never paused, never wavered, and which ran with an undulating, snakish motion of the body. There was a faint chattering sound, faint yet indescribably fierce, a flash of white, and the weasel, for such it was, plunged into the water where the rat had done, and swam swiftly across.

But the rat was there to meet him, there with his back to the rocks, watching, fully prepared. He had been followed far enough, and now had turned at bay—a grizzly, hard-fighting veteran of crime, who would have faced man himself had circumstances presented no alternative.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

When a weasel attacks he makes no bones about it. He goes right in and the band begins to play before his opponent has time to pull himself together. That was what this one did, but he got the surprise of his life. Next second he was spinning in mid-air, a foot from the ground, and a chattering squeal broke the quietude. He came down spread-eagle at the water's edge, and the big rat rushed him ere he could regain his feet. There was a moment's scuffle, and both were in the water, while around them glanced and danced a fireplay of flashing swords.

The angler drew nearer. This was an affair after his own heart. He saw something creep out and perch on a stone, all hunched and wretched-looking. It was the rat, and as he sat there the weasel went right in again, and both were in the water. Downstream they floated, turning and splashing, then both disappeared, came up, and disappeared once again.

'By gad, the rat's going to drown him!' muttered the angler, and he crept up hurriedly on all fours, the better to see. Then, ere he could realise it, they were on the gravel at his very side, fighting like fury, and coming straight towards him. He picked up a stone and threw it at them; it shattered into fragments right between the two, but evidently each regarded it as the work of the other, for neither paused. They were rolling over and over, locked in a death-grip, the rat edging back for the stream, the weasel fighting to gain the bank above.

The rat had weight and gradient in his favour, so back to the stream they went, back and in, and under, while the man stood upright not a yard away, watching. He saw the antagonists split apart. He saw the weasel bounding downstream, chattering, coughing, half-drowned, while the rat sat hunched up and watched it go.

'You brave old desperado,' thought the man. 'You may be all the vile things man calls you, you may have no lovable or even pardonable trait in all your character, but you're brave. You beat him on his own ground and at his own game—that deadliest little fighter in all the woods!'

Yellow Tooth, the house-rat, sat there in the gloom for fully fifty seconds, surrounded by a sea of burnished gold, then leisurely he hopped back to the point at which the fight began, and vanished among the rank foliage that overhung the stream.

YELLOW TOOTH was what they call a summer rat—that is, with the coming of the warm weather he had forsaken the granaries and pigsties and cosy byres of mankind and taken to the water's edge to spend the summer in luxurious bachelorhood. The nearest village was over two miles upstream, and very evident it was that the weasel had driven Yellow Tooth out of his bank burrow. Hence his arrival here.

Be that as it may, Yellow Tooth decided to take root. Following the tiny stream away up into the wood, he nursed his wounds that night amidst the dense entanglement of ferns, and at dawn he hunted.

Gee, what a land of plenty! The valley of the tiny stream which cut the wood in two was one of those hidden-away little corners Nature seems to have laid aside for the gentler of her kindred. Here the undergrowth grew in denser masses than elsewhere, and beneath it were a hundred pitfalls among the rocks—thigh-deep crevices, screened with hart's-tongue fern or camouflaged with parti-coloured mosses and tangled weeds. Amidst this chaos Yellow Tooth moved unseen, and a robin that hopped in took no heed of that dull-grey stone among the ferns, till it fell upon him, and then it was too late.

Daylight came, and Yellow Tooth searched round for a permanent abode. At the foot of a decayed tree standing at the water's edge, nothing left of it but the trunk from which grew fungi instead of limbs, was a flat boulder of rock, all undermined with mouse-runs. Yellow Tooth set to work and enlarged one of the holes, then under the rock he found a spacious chamber, lined with husks. On every side of it the mouse-holes admitted light and draught, so the old rat stopped each hole with sticks, and trod them in with earth, till only the one entrance he himself had made was left. This done, he emerged into the sunlight once more and collected a bed of dry bracken and leaves, dragging it in after him till the chamber was almost filled. By the only entrance he left a mound of leaves, which formed, as it were, a virtually self-closing and draught-proof door behind him.

His new summer home now completed, Yellow Tooth went to the stream to drink, and as he reached the water's edge he caught sight of a little russet animal away up the bank, moving this way and that with spasmodic, jerky motions. It wore the white front of the weasel, and was something the same shade,

YELLOW TOOTH, THE TRESPASSER

yet Yellow Tooth, who had never seen the like of it before, knew that it belonged not to the killer tribe, but was meat to be killed. So he froze where he sat and waited—all hunched up, his tearful little black eyes fixed on the squirrel as it jerked its way nearer, nearer.

Then all at once that squirrel sat up with a mighty 'Churr,' and the rat saw it was time to act. He took one ungainly hop, which carried him farther and faster than it seemed, but the squirrel was not there. Instead he was hanging head downwards from the dead tree-trunk, nearly six feet away, chattering and shrieking at him like ten thousand fishwives.

Then came another squirrel, and yet another, appearing from the sunlight patches, and the whole valley was filled with chattering volleys of wrath. There were seven squirrels in all, most of them tiny chaps, some in the trees, some on the ground, and it looked for a moment as if Yellow Tooth would be mobbed. But the squirrels had no sense of combination; if one grew bold the rest drew back and left him to it, so Yellow Tooth coolly drank his fill, then returned leisurely to his den.

It cannot be wondered at that the squirrels resented the big rat's presence, for just as he knew them for what they were so they knew him as a creature of the cities—or rather as one who was trespassing here. He belonged to the drains and the filth that filters through them: they belonged to the green leaves and the sunshine, and this little valley was undividedly theirs. It had been theirs since early spring, and five out of the seven were born in that very hollow tree at the foot of which Yellow Tooth had made his home.

Thus opened the feud between the house-rat and the dwellers of the branches. Never, while daylight lasted, could he leave his den without being seen by one or more of them, which meant that soon the whole family would be chattering round his head. They would follow him from place to place, advertising his presence, spoiling his hunting, till Yellow Tooth, becoming desperate, would hide from view and was speedily forgotten.

At night-time the squirrel family slept in the hollow tree, and Yellow Tooth would have climbed up and settled the matter while they slept, but, though brave in defence, he was a coward in attack.

produced two of the purest, whitest eggs in the very scantiest nest imaginable—so scanty, indeed, that one could see the eggs through the bottom of it as one stood below. Yellow Tooth saw them, his attention attracted by the wings of the old bird as she rose, and promptly he began to climb steadily upwards, creating no sound, and screened by the undergrowth, for he climbed close to the trunk. A man would never have seen him, even a lynx might have missed him, but the squirrels saw him and came leaping from branch to branch till they were all round him in a screeching, gibbering mob. It was bad enough to see him on the ground, but to catch him in the branches was beyond endurance. Their presence in the tree, their angry gibberings, brought a bolt from the blue in the form of a desperately earnest mother ringdove.

It was the animals she was after, not the rat in particular, and the only reason why she singled him out from the rest was because he chanced to be nearest to her treasures. So Yellow Tooth received a lashing blow in the face that sent him spinning. Down through the branches he dropped, clutching the twigs to break his fall, and finally landing on a hard, bare rock with a stinging flop. And as he hurried off he blamed the squirrels for his defeat, and decided to get even with them.

FOR days the sun had poured its unrelenting rays from a cloudless sky, but that evening it grew dark long before the accustomed hour. Then the wind began to blow. It blew at first with savage gusts, increased in strength, veered to the north, and now the whole wood was filled with a sullen roar. Branches flew across the shadows, wraiths in the wind, and crashed to earth; the big trees swung and shook, colliding, interlocking their branches. Seldom before had the mountainside been filled with such a bedlam of sound.

The squirrels crept into the hollow tree and curled themselves together. They were creatures of the sunlight and come what might in the way of weather they would sleep it out. The ringdove spread wide her pearly wings to shield her newly-hatched young. The small birds stole into the deepest thickets. Even Yellow Tooth remained at home.

Then, above the din of the gale there came another sound—a mighty crash of thunder, succeeding a flash of light. The wind ceased as the omnipotent voice of the thunder-king

NOT far away from the hollow trunk stood a single larch, and in it a ringdove had

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

commanded it. There was a moment's uncanny silence, a hiss, quickly growing into a roar.

My stars, how it rained! No, it was not rain at all, but the descent of solid sheets and clouds of water, that weighed down the branches and beat the undergrowth to the ground. In ten seconds rivulets were flowing everywhere; in twenty, torrents were streaming down the mountainside where no torrents had run for ninety years. Such cloudbursts come but once in a way, to leave their scars for many years.

Yellow Tooth was flooded out, and as he mounted the boulder, undecided which way to turn, a roar sounded away up the wood. It was as though a mighty dam on the mountainside had suddenly burst its wall, for down the tiny valley there came a torrent of peat-stained waters. It came in a solid wall, crashing in cascades over the rocks, tearing up the undergrowth, rooting up the trees, rocking the very rocks which had stood unshaken for a thousand years.

Yellow Tooth knew it to be a foe with which he could not cope. Terror fell upon him. He leapt for the hollow tree, clung to the gnarled bark with desperate claws, and began to climb upwards. Even the squirrels awoke and looked out to see what was amiss, but all they saw in the gloom was the hated house-rat climbing up through the deluge. Face that storm they could not, dare not, and so they crouched trembling, awaiting the awful one, whom they knew would slay them in their terror.

The wall of water struck the blasted tree, and over it went like a straw struck by a cyclone, crashing among the rocks, instantly to be snatched up by the flood and borne away on the wreck-strewn waters, now carrying everything in their stride.

Yellow Tooth held tight, and luckily for him the tree fell opposite side downwards. Luckily for the squirrels too, for even as it fell they poured forth from the cranny halfway up. As the tree crashed to earth two of them lost their hold and were swept away, but Yellow Tooth and the rest clung on.

Not far did the dead tree drift, for, almost

instantly, one end caught between the rocks and jammed, disappearing into a smother of foam, while the other reared giddily upwards, the torrent all around. At the high end the squirrels were bunched together, flattened to the trunk; lower down, only just above the waterline, clung Yellow Tooth.

Rapidly the water rose, and, squealing in terror, Yellow Tooth began to crawl slowly up towards the squirrels.

Did they combine? No. It was a case of every squirrel for himself, for Yellow Tooth had them cornered, and so every squirrel fought, not as a company against a common foe, but each as an individual against a foe who had singled him out. They bit, they clawed, they tore one of Yellow Tooth's ears in two, but he merely screamed and hung on, climbing desperately towards the topmost point.

The rain had completely ceased. There was no sound but the roar of the cascade, and now, at this farcical crisis, the dead tree split asunder. Yellow Tooth clung to a fragment, and was swept away, the squirrels leapt from point to point, and were swallowed up in the gloom.

Thirty yards farther down the big rat swam ashore. Blindly, weakly, shaking the water from his ears, he crawled up the bank, and from a branch overhead sounded a squirrel's churr of farewell!

Everywhere was the drip-drip and the roar of water. The dead leaves were washed into ridges and plateaux, holding up little ponds and jet-black pools through which the house-rat plunged. A flash of sheet-lightning flooded the billowy sky and set a million diamonds sparkling on every leaf and twig. It showed something, too, that flashed across a thicket—a little group of shadowy forms, a glint of white, a line of blood-red scintillating eyes, all heading for the open. There was a whole pack of them, hunting together, scavenging the wood after the upheaval—a little pack of imps racing at the heels of the storm, striking snake-like left and right at anything that moved. And into that area of death, into the very path of the hunting weasels, Yellow Tooth, the trespasser, was tottering.

Watchdogs of Music.—In this article in our March issue on the Performing Right Society of Great Britain we regret we said wrongly that qualification for membership of the Society was publication of at least six musical items. The sole requirement now, we are courteously told by the Secretary of the Society, is not publication but that work of the applicant is being performed in public to an appreciable extent.

Science at Your Service

AN ELECTRONIC PHOTOGRAPHIC-FLASH APPLIANCE

WHAT is claimed to be the first lightweight electronic flash appliance is now available for photographers. The flash is derived from a small circular tube, which has a lifetime capacity of about 25,000 flashes. This sharply contrasts, of course, with the much older chemical method of igniting magnesium powder and with that of the flash-bulb with its single use. The new appliance can be attached to the range-finder shoe of a camera or by means of a bracket. The power to operate the tube comes from a small battery pack containing six hearing-aid batteries; this is quite small, just over 3 by 2 inches, weighs 1 lb. 10 oz., and can be fitted easily into the pocket. The tube and reflector weighs only 14 oz. It is stated that 500-1000 flashes can be obtained from one battery pack, which reduces the cost of the photographic flash to a fraction of a penny. Where power is available from the mains, the flash appliance can be directly connected, so for studio use the battery may be discarded.

A STROP FOR SAFETY-RAZOR BLADES

The general advent of safety-razor blades has made bathroom stropping a comparatively rare masculine activity. Nevertheless, it is possible to strop safety-razor blades and to prolong their effective lives quite appreciably. During the War, when supply was uncertain, many a blade was kept in use by rubbing its edges on the curved inside surface of a glass tumbler. However, most people prefer to avoid handling these small and sharp blades with their fingers and a specially designed stropping outfit will be welcomed. A plastics holder takes the blade: any three-holed blade may be quickly placed in it. A cowhide strop, fixed on a wooden backing, is the other component of the outfit. A small tin of stropping compound to keep the leather surface soft is also supplied. The price of the outfit is reasonable. If regular stropping doubles the life of each blade the outlay can be recovered in just over six months.

AN ELECTRIC SAFETY-SWITCH

A new type of rotary electric switch may prove useful in industry or public buildings. The switch is designed so that only authorised persons can use it, to meet circumstances in which it would be dangerous or undesirable if the current flow for a power or lighting circuit was accidentally or foolishly switched off. The switch can also be arranged for many different sequences, whereby the electrical circuits in use can be altered as well as switched off. The new switch is operated by a small key, the switch itself carrying only the keyhole or socket. These safety-switches are available in 5, 10, or 20 ampere capacities and for voltages up to 600 A.C. or D.C. They are manufactured in various sizes in a very full range of fittings.

THE COMMON COLD

As a subject for research the common cold is proving particularly intractable. As is well known, an ex-American military hospital in Wiltshire has been used throughout the post-war period as a common cold research centre. Members of the public have volunteered in large numbers to act as guinea-pigs. Conclusions that can so far be drawn are mainly of a tentative nature. Whether a person develops a cold seems to depend more upon his or her susceptibility at the time of exposure than upon the amount of exposure. It has often been thought that children with colds are particularly dangerous carriers, but experiments designed to test this theory have failed to show any significant differences between children and adults as sources of infection. Colds can be spread by infected droplets in the air, but experiments indicate that this mode of infection has a very low rate. Infection as a result of indirect contact, handling objects previously handled by people with colds, is also low in rate. One of the clearest findings in this difficult research project is that individuals vary considerably in their reactions to infective exposure; however common the cold is, it is certainly not a phenomenon with rigid rules and properties.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

SALT AND THE SOIL

The damage to soil caused by the disastrous winter floods in eastern England and in Holland has made numbers of people wonder why, at the same time, salt can be recommended as a fertiliser for certain crops. If salt water can do so much harm, how can dressings of salt in solid form be beneficial? The answer is fairly simple. It is a question of quantity. For crops like sugar-beet, mangolds, fodder-beet, and turnips the dressing per acre is only 5 hundredweights or approximately 2 ounces per square yard. But the amount of salt in a foot of sea-water lying over an acre of land is from 34 to 35 tons. Even if only an inch of this water actually enters the soil, it is equivalent to a dressing of 3 tons per acre. When up to 5 hundredweights of salt is applied to soil before a salt-responsive crop is grown, there is no long-term permanence in the dressing, for much of it will be taken up by the crop itself. It is a very different matter when top-soil has absorbed as much as 3 or 6 tons of salt, especially if the soil contains an appreciable proportion of clay. Then sodium clays are formed in the place of the more amiable calcium clays; in dry weather these sodium clays are as hard as stone and in wet weather they have a glue-like stickiness. Such soils are virtually unworkable, and they will remain so until some years of weathering have removed most of the sodium. Fortunately, the elimination of salt from soil can be much accelerated by treating salt-damaged soils with gypsum (calcium sulphate) at from 1 to 3 tons per acre. No risks of damage to soils, even to the heaviest clay soils, are involved in the normal use of agricultural salt. For crops and for soils enough is as good as a feast. The flood damage has been caused by gross excess.

ARE ANTIBIOTICS MODERN?

Interesting evidence that the bactericidal properties of antibiotic substances were known many years ago has recently emerged. In country districts of western Ireland buttered bread was left in damp cupboards to form a green mould, which could then be used as a healing plaster for cuts or sores. It is said that this household remedy was in use long before the days of scientific medicine. Investigations by Dublin medical workers have established the fact that the green mould was *penicillium*, the parent material for penicillin. In America the notebooks of an Iowa doctor of 1900 have

yielded the following remarks on one of his cases: 'Sept. 9—Robert S., age 18, acute tonsillitis, temp. 104, very septic sore throat. . . . Sept. 10—Still very ill, giving him mouldy bread with aspirin in capsules four times a day. . . . Sept. 11—Improvement is unbelievable. I shall give all my patients with fever and infections mould. If I should tell the other doctors about this, they would think I'm crazy.'

A NEW USE FOR CHARCOAL

As a domestic fuel, charcoal is one of the oldest known, but in recent generations it has been used only for special purposes—for example, for grills, where its even heat and relatively pure combustion fumes both make for high-quality performance. A lesser-known and modern use for charcoal is in lighting solid-fuel, heat-storage cookers. Graded charcoal can be used with these appliances without first emptying the grate, and the volume of gases given off is not so large as to risk choking the flue outlet, a trouble often encountered with some grades of coal. However, this is a special use that depends upon supply, and graded charcoal has been far from easily obtainable. Cartons of graded and screened charcoal produced from hardwood are now being distributed; each carton contains sufficient charcoal for three lightings. Three lightings may not seem to represent a lasting supply, but, as owners know, the lighting problem with heat-storage cookers does not frequently occur.

VACUUM CONTAINERS

There is nothing new in the principle of the vacuum-flask for heat retention: indeed, the idea had enjoyed considerable use in laboratories before it was adapted for domestic purposes. It is strange that domestic development has mainly confined itself to a single task, the storage of hot drinks or very cold drinks. As a result, a new vacuum food-jar seems quite a novelty. It has a capacity of half-a-gallon and can be used for carrying hot or cold food or, of course, fluids. The outer surface is made of moulded plastic in a lustrous finish, six different colour-shades being available. The interior is made of special heat-resisting glass. There are two screw-on serving bowls. A handle for carrying the vacuum-jar is fixed to the outer casing. There should be considerable demand for the new appliance, especially from motorists.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A BRITISH OIL AND FAT EXTRACTING ADVANCE

It is too often assumed that all the important technological advances are made in America and that Britain, even when she initiates an idea, cannot take it to the final point of industrial development. It is true that this has sometimes happened, and to our grievous economic loss, but usually this has been the result more of circumstances than of any lack of native ability. Entirely British advances are not always spectacular and for that reason little is written about them outside the industrial press. A typical example is a new process for extracting oils and fats from natural cellular materials. All over the world factories for many years have been extracting natural fats and oils, but it has always been thought necessary to break up the cells with some kind of heat treatment. A British company has recently introduced a cold-water process and this seems likely to revolutionise one of the world's universal industries. All heat treatments have suffered from the disadvantages of colour darkening, quality degradation, etc. The new cold process breaks up the cells of natural material, even material as hard as bone, by physical impulses; a cylindrical chamber housing a series of high-speed rotating arms causes the water to transmit severe and frequent blows to the cellular substance. The water acts like a battery of hydraulic drills on the material causing almost instant fracture of the cells, and the released fat or oil can be easily separated.

With this process better-quality oils and fats can be obtained; the fuel costs of heat treatment methods are saved; continuous rather than batch-by-batch processing is possible, so that smaller plants can be used for the same output. It has a very wide application, ranging from the extraction of fats from bones to the extraction of oil from fish livers.

RUBBER-BODIED BARROWS

Industrial wheelbarrows with rubber bodies have recently been introduced. They are lighter than ordinary barrows and have special suitability for fragile or sticky materials. The flexibility of the rubber minimises the

risk of damage when fragile goods are carried; and, since rubber is resistant to many types of adhesive effect, sticky materials can be removed much more easily after carriage in these barrows. The rubber-bodied barrows offer high resistance to acid or alkaline materials, and wear from abrasion is said to be less than that with ordinary metal-bodied barrows. Another general advantage claimed is total lightness; only the skeleton frame of the new rubber-bodied barrows is made of steel.

BAGS WITHOUT SEAMS

The jute or hessian sack, for so many years one of the dominant containers of industrial materials but recently facing active competition from multi-ply paper sacks, is changing its traditional shape. A new type of loom produces the woven textile in tubular form; from the continuous tube of material sack-lengths can be cut, and when the bottoms of these sections are sewn a sack without side-seams is the result. This adds strength to jute sacks, for one of the weaker points of these containers, especially when filled with difficult chemicals, has long been the stitched seams at the sides. The new type of sack should be of particular interest to agricultural traders.

NYLON IN SURGERY

Relief of arthritis-damaged joints is an unexpected development for nylon, but a group of Boston, U.S.A., doctors have used thin sheets of nylon to line the under-surfaces of arthritic kneecaps. The surgical technique involves attaching the nylon to the bone with stainless-steel staples. Three weeks after the operation partial weight-bearing, while the knee is still in a plaster-cast, is permitted; it takes six months, however, before the joint is able to function properly. Satisfactory results were secured in 58 out of 78 kneecap operations, and in all cases the arthritic condition was so well established that no response could be obtained from other treatments. So far, the operation has been limited to only one kneecap, since, if successful, the relief given to one leg will be sufficient to enable a patient to move about without help.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Vegetables for the Future

MAY can be a very treacherous month. Severe frosts may occur during the second and third weeks, and very often when plants are growing well. It is a month when weeds can grow very strong indeed, and therefore the hoe must be kept going. One method of controlling weeds is to use the correct type of sedge-peat and to apply it as a mulch, alongside the rows, of course. This treatment smothers the weed seedlings and yet provides the exact type of organic matter that vegetables delight in. Apply the mulch at about a 2-gallon bucketful to the yard run.

May is a great month for bean sowing. The runner-beans should be planted in the third week in the South and even at the end of the month in the North. The French-beans can usually go in during the first week of May in the warmer parts, and as late as the third week in the colder. It is possible, too, to make a further sowing of broad-beans outside. In fact, I am very fond of this later crop, because so often we get a dish of broad-beans once or twice during the season, and then never again. The great thing to remember with these three beans is that they dislike acid soil, so, after the organic matter has been dug in, whether it be the dung or compost at, say, one good barrow-load to 10 square yards, and after the fish-manure has been forked into the top inch or two at 4 ounces to the square yard, hydrated lime may be applied as a surface dressing, at anything from 4 to 7 ounces to the square yard, depending on the acidity of the ground. You can easily test soil acidity yourself by using a B.D.H. Soil Indicator.

With broccoli, the winter cauliflower, one can obtain a continuous supply by means of sowing a number of varieties. The seeds can be sown in a nice warm bed at this time of the year, and the plants thus raised can be put out into the open ground in July. Early Feltham will turn in in February, Mid Feltham in March and April, Satisfaction in late April as a rule, Late Feltham in May, and Clucus's June the last of all. Make the rows 6 inches apart, sow thinly, and, as I have said, by having a number of varieties there will be delicious

cauliflowers to use throughout the winter months.

If you sowed carrots early, these often need thinning, and there is always the danger of the carrot-fly getting in and laying her eggs at thinning-time. Be prepared, therefore, to use whizzed naphthalene and to apply this in between the rows at 1 ounce to the yard run the moment the thinning operation has been completed. You can use this substance, also, for keeping away the onion-fly, whose maggots ruin this crop. Do not, however, put it on the plants or it may taint them.

May I appeal for successional sowings of lettuce during May. It is very difficult to persuade people to sow, say, a quarter of a row of a variety like Webb's Wonderful each week, but if this is done you will be able to cut lettuces over a far longer period, and will be able to avoid having too many hearted specimens at one time and none later. I usually sow my peas on a similar scale. How many rows of peas there should be depends on how many there are in the family, but if you are going to put in the variety Onward, for instance, it pays to make a short sowing every ten days. Give, of course, the usual protection against mice and birds if this is found to be necessary.

Marrow plants may be put out towards the end of the month for safety and so may the ridge cucumber plants. And, by the way, have you tried the variety of cucumber known as Hampshire Giant? It is undoubtedly the heaviest-cropping outdoor cucumber there is, and it looks much more like an indoor kind than any other type. If you have not raised the plants under glass, you can sow the seed out of doors where the cucumbers are to grow, and pop a glass jam-jar upside down over the top to give a little extra heat. Do not remove the jam-jar until the plants have started to grow.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

BLADDER WEAKNESS

ABSORBENT BAGS

Male day pattern, 38/6
New Model Female day pattern, 50/-

"DUPLEX" BAGS

Male, day and night, 70/-

Our bags catch all leakage, easing mind and body. Invisible under clothing and easily emptied. Now worn world wide. Special patterns for motorists and aviators.

Diagrams, etc., on request from:

HILLIARD

213 DOUGLAS STREET : GLASGOW, C2.

THE CHALET GIRLS' COOK BOOK

by ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER

FOUR favourite 'Chalet' girls get together on the subject of cookery, and produce their best and most exciting recipes. Needless to say, the recipes are not all 'good plain cooking.' As might be expected from the Chalet School girls, each contributes many of the more exciting and delicious recipes for which her country is famed.

224 pages; 5s. 6d. net.

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD.
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

An English
Coxswain



**HIS
LIFE
AND
YOURS**

depend upon first-class equipment — which costs money. *You* can help the lifeboatman to keep up his great tradition of service. Send your contribution, however small, to

ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION

42, GROSVENOR GARDENS,
LONDON, S.W.1

Treasurer :

His Grace The Duke of Northumberland

Secretary :

Col. A. D. Burnett Brown, M.C., T.D., M.A.



BRITISH WILD FLOWERS

An Illustrated Handbook

AN excellent handbook of all the wild flowers likely to be seen in the British Isles. Hundreds of flowers are fully described and easy identification tables are given. The folklore of flowers is dealt with at some length. 240 pages; numerous plates and line and half-tone drawings; jacket in full colour.

*with eighty fine
colour plates*

21s. net.

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 THISTLE STREET, EDINBURGH 2

MACVITA

(REGD)

THE PERFECT FOOD

Per 1¹/₂ PACKET

(NET WEIGHT 8 oz.)

A delicious
change
from Bread

Crisp and Creamy—Unsweetened

Try it with butter, marmalade, cheese, etc.



REGD TRADE MARK

MADE ONLY BY

MCVITIE & PRICE, LTD.

EDINBURGH

LONDON

MANCHESTER